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Sir Josh. Reynolds Pinxt.

J. Trotter Sculp.


P R E F A C E S,
B I O G R A P H I C A L
A N D
C R I T I C A L,
T O T H E
W O R K S
O F T H E
E N G L I S H P O E T S.
B Y S A M U E L J O H N S O N.

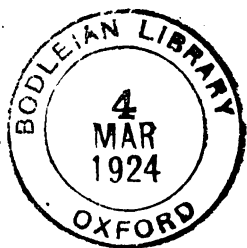
VOLUME THE FIRST.

L O N D O N:

PRINTED BY J. NICHOLS;

FOR C. BATHURST, J. BUCKLAND, W. STRAHAN, J. RIVINGTON AND SONS, T. DAVIES, T. PAYNE, L. DAVIS, W. OWEN, B. WHITE, S. CROWDER, T. CASLON, T. LONGMAN, B. LAW, E. AND C. DILLY, J. DODSLEY, H. BALDWIN, J. WILKIE, J. ROBSON, J. JOHNSON, T. LOWNDES, T. BECKET, G. ROBINSON, T. CADELL, W. DAVIS, J. NICHOLS, F. NEWBERY, T. EVANS, J. RILEY, R. BALDWIN, G. NICOL, LEIGH AND SOTHEY, J. BEW, N. CONANT, J. MURRAY, W. FOX, J. BOWEN.

M D C C L X X I X. 



P R E F A C E S

T O

C O W L E Y

A N D

W A L L E R.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Booksellers having determined to publish a Body of English Poetry, I was persuaded to promise them a Preface to the Works of each Author; an undertaking, as it was then presented to my mind, not very tedious or difficult.

My purpose was only to have allotted to every Poet an Advertisement, like those which we find in the French Miscellanies, containing a few dates and a general character; but I have been led beyond my intention, I hope, by the

VOL. I. * b honest

honest desire of giving useful pleasure.

In this minute kind of History, the succession of facts is not easily discovered; and I am not without suspicion that I have placed some of Dryden's works in wrong years. I have followed Langbaine, as the best authority for his plays; and if I shall hereafter obtain a more correct chronology, will publish it; but I do not yet know that my account is erroneous.

I had been told, that in the College of Physicians there is some memorial of Dryden's funeral, but my intelligence was not true; the story therefore wants the credit which such a testimony would have given it.

it. There is in Farquhar's Letters an indistinct mention of it, as irregular and disorderly, and of the oration which was then spoken. More than this I have not discovered.

I have been told that Dryden's Remarks on Rymer have been printed before. The former edition I have not seen. This was transcribed for the press from his own manuscript.

March 15, 1779.



DIRECTIONS TO THE BINDER.

The LIVES OF THE POETS, herewith delivered, are to be
sewed in FOUR separate Volumes; viz.

VOL. I. ADVERTISEMENT; COWLEY, WALLER.

II. MILTON, BUTLER.

III. DRYDEN.

**IV. DENHAM, SPRAT, ROSCOMMON, ROCHESTER,
YALDEN, OTWAY, DUKE, DORSET, HALI-
FAX, STEPNEY, WALSH, GARTH, KING,
J. PHILIPS, SMITH, POMFRET, HUGHES.**

*** A Head is engraved of every Poet marked with an
Afterisk; TWENTY-EIGHT in all.

The POEMS are contained in FIFTY-SIX VOLUMES.

VOL. I, 2, * COWLEY.

3, 4, 5, * MILTON.

6, 7, * BUTLER.

8, * WALLER.

9, * DENHAM, SPRAT.

10, ROSCOMMON, ROCHESTER, YALDEN.

11, * OTWAY, DUKE, DORSET.

12, HALIFAX, STEPNEY, WALSH.

13—16, * DRYDEN.

17—19, DRYDEN'S VIRGIL.

20, * GARTH, KING.

21, * J. PHILIPS, SMITH, POMFRET.

22, * HUGHES.

• •

23, A.D.

- 23, * ADDISON.
 24, * BLACKMORE.
 25, * BUCKINGHAM, LANSDOWNE.
 26, * ROWE, TICKELL.
 27, 28, ROWE'S LUCAN.
 29, * CONGREVE, PENTON.
 30, 31, * PRIOR.
 32—34, * POPE.
 35—38, POPE'S HOMER.
 39, 40, * SWIFT.
 41, 42, * GAY.
 43, * BROOME, PITT.
 44, * PARNELL, A. PHILIPS.
 45, SAVAGE.
 46, * WATTS.
 47, SOMERVILE.
 48, * THOMSON.
 49, THOMSON, HAMMOND, COLLINS.
 50—52, * YOUNG.
 53, * DYER, MALLEY.
 54, * SHENSTONE.
 55, * AKENSIDE.
 56, * LYTTTELTON, WEST, GRAY.



E R R A T A.

COWLEY, p. 158. *last line, read strong brass*

WALLER, p. 85. l. 3. *for lost read left*

DRYDEN, p. 73. l. 15. *for beam read leave*
p. 212. *last line, add betray'd.*

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111

COWLEY.

THE life of Cowley, notwithstanding the penury of English biography, has been written by Dr. Sprat, an author whose pregnancy of imagination and elegance of language have deservedly set him high in the ranks of literature; but his zeal of friendship, or ambition of eloquence, has produced a funeral oration rather than a history: he has given the character, not the life of Cowley; for he

B

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writes with so little detail, that scarcely any thing is distinctly known, but all is shown confused and enlarged through the mist of panegyrick.

ABRAHAM COWLEY was born in the year one thousand six hundred and eighteen. His father was a grocer, whose condition Dr. Sprat conceals under the general appellation of a citizen; and, what would probably not have been less carefully suppressed, the omission of his name in the register of St. Dunstan's parish, gives reason to suspect that his father was a sectary. Whoever he was, he died before the birth of his son, and consequently left him to the care of his mother; whom Wood represents as struggling earnestly

C O W L E Y. 3

ly to procure him a literary education, and who, as she lived to the age of eighty, had her solicitude rewarded by seeing her son eminent, and, I hope, by seeing him fortunate, and partaking his prosperity. We know at least, from Sprat's account, that he always acknowledged her care, and justly paid the dues of filial gratitude.

In the window of his mother's apartment lay Spenser's *Fairy Queen*; in which he very early took delight to read, till, by feeling the charms of verse, he became, as he relates, irrecoverably a Poet. Such are the accidents, which, sometimes remembered, and perhaps sometimes forgotten, produce that particular designation of

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mind, and propensity for some certain science or employment, which is commonly called Genius. The true Genius is a mind of large general powers, accidentally determined to some particular direction. The great painter of the present age had the first fondness for his art excited by the perusal of Richardson's treatise.

By his mother's solicitation he was admitted into Westminster-school, where he was soon distinguished. He, was wont, says Sprat, to relate, " That he
" had this defect in his memory at
" that time, that his teachers never
" could bring it to retain the ordinary
" rules of grammar."

This is an instance of the natural desire of man to propagate a wonder. It is surely very difficult to tell any thing as it was heard, when Sprat could not refrain from amplifying a commodious incident, though the book to which he prefixed his narrative contained its confutation. A memory admitting some things, and rejecting others, an intellectual digestion that concocted the pulp of learning, but refused the husks, had the appearance of an instinctive elegance, of a particular provision made by Nature for literary politeness. But in the author's own honest relation, the marvel vanishes: he was, he says, such
 “ an enemy to all constraint, that his
 “ master never could prevail on him

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“ to learn the rules without book.” He does not tell that he could not learn the rules, but that being able to perform his exercises without them, and being an “ enemy to constraint,” he spared himself the labour.

Among the English poets, Cowley, Milton, and Pope, might be said “ to lisp in numbers ;” and have given such early proofs, not only of powers of language, but of comprehension of things, as to more tardy minds seems scarcely credible. But of the learned puerilities of Cowley there is no doubt, since a volume of his poems was not only written but printed in his thirteenth year ; containing, with other poetical compositions, “ The tragical
“ History

“History of Pyramus and Thisbe,” written when he was ten years old; and “Constantia and Philetus,” written two years after.

While he was yet at school he produced a comedy called “Love’s Riddle,” though it was not published till he had been some time at Cambridge. This comedy is of the pastoral kind, which requires no acquaintance with the living world, and therefore the time at which it was composed adds little to the wonders of Cowley’s minority.

In 1636, he was removed to Cambridge, where he continued his studies with great intenseness; for he is said to have written, while he was yet a young student, the greater part of his *Davideis*;

8. C O W L E Y,

a work of which the materials could not have been collected without the study of many years, but by a mind of the greatest vigour and activity.

Two years after his settlement at Cambridge he published "Love's Riddle," with a poetical dedication to Sir Kenelm Digby; of whose acquaintance all his contemporaries seem to have been ambitious; and "Naufragium Jocularè;" a comedy written in Latin, but without due attention to the ancient models; for it is not loose verse, but mere prose. It was printed, with a dedication in verse to Dr. Comber, master of the college; but having neither the facility of a popular nor the accuracy of a learned work,

work, it seems to be now universally neglected.

At the beginning of the civil war, as the Prince passed through Cambridge in his way to York, he was entertained with the representation of the "Guardian," a comedy, which Cowley says was neither written nor acted, but roughdrawn by him, and repeated by the scholars. That this comedy was printed during his absence from his country, he appears to have considered as injurious to his reputation; though, during the suppression of the theatres, it was sometimes privately acted with sufficient approbation.

In 1643, being now master of arts, he was, by the prevalence of the parliament,

liament, ejected from Cambridge, and sheltered himself at St. John's College in Oxford; where, as is said by Wood, he published a satire called "The Puritan and Papist," which was never inserted in any collection of his works; and so distinguished himself by the warmth of his loyalty, and the elegance of his conversation, that he gained the kindness and confidence of those who attended the king, and amongst others of lord Falkland, whose notice cast a lustre on all to whom it was extended.

About the time when Oxford was surrendered to the parliament, he followed the Queen to Paris, where he became secretary to the lord Jermin, afterwards

terwards earl of St. Albans; and was employed in such correspondence as the royal cause required, and particularly in ciphering and deciphering the letters that passed between the king and queen; an employment of the highest confidence and honour. So wide was his province of intelligence, that, for several years, it filled all his days and two or three nights in the week.

In the year 1647, his “Mistress” was published; for he imagined, as he declared in his preface to a subsequent edition, that “poets are scarce thought
“freemen of their company without
“paying some duties, or obliging them-
“selves to be true to Love.”

This

This obligation to amorous ditties owes, I believe, its original to the fame of Petrarch, who, in an age rude and uncultivated, by his tuneful homage to his Laura, refined the manners of the lettered world, and filled Europe with love and poetry. But the basis of all excellence is truth: he that professes love ought to feel its power. Petrarch was a real lover, and Laura doubtless deserved his tenderness. Of Cowley, we are told by Barnes, who had means enough of information, that, whatever he may talk of his own inflammability, and the variety of characters by which his heart was divided, he in reality was in love but once, and then never had resolution to tell his passion.

This consideration cannot but abate, in some measure, the reader's esteem for the work and the author. To love excellence, is natural; it is natural likewise for the lover to solicit reciprocal regard by an elaborate display of his own qualifications. The desire of pleasing has in different men produced actions of heroism, and effusions of wit; but it seems as reasonable to appear the champion as the poet of an "airy nothing," and to quarrel as to write for what Cowley might have learned from his master Pindar to call the "dream of a shadow."

It is surely not difficult, in the solitude of a college, or in the bustle of the world, to find useful studies and se-

rious employment. No man needs to be so burthened with life as to squander it in voluntary dreams of fictitious occurrences. The man that sits down to suppose himself charged with treason or peculation, and heats his mind to an elaborate purgation of his character from crimes which he was never within the possibility of committing, differs only by the infrequency of his folly from him who praises beauty which he never saw, complains of jealousy which he never felt; supposes himself sometimes invited, and sometimes forsaken; fatigues his fancy, and ransacks his memory, for images which may exhibit the gaiety of hope, or the gloominess of despair, and dresses his imaginary Chloris or Phyllis

some-

sometimes in flowers fading as her beauty, and sometimes in gems lasting as her virtues.

At Paris, as secretary to lord Jermin, he was engaged in transacting things of real importance with real men and real women, and at that time did not much employ his thoughts upon phantoms of gallantry. Some of his letters to Mr. Bennet, afterwards earl of Arlington, from April to December in 1650, are preserved in "*Miscellanea Aulica*," a collection of papers published by Brown. These letters being written like those of other men whose mind is more on things than words, contribute no otherwise to his reputation than as they shew him to have been above the affectation

tation of unseasonable elegance, and to have known that the business of a statesman can be little forwarded by flowers of rhetorick.

One passage, however, seems not unworthy of some notice. Speaking of the Scotch treaty then in agitation :

“ The Scotch treaty,” says he, “ is
 “ the only thing now in which we are
 “ vitally concerned ; I am one of the
 “ last hopers, and yet cannot now abstain
 “ from believing, that an agreement
 “ will be made : all people upon the
 “ place incline to that of union. The
 “ Scotch will moderate something of
 “ the rigour of their demands, the
 “ mutual necessity of an accord is visible,
 “ the King is persuaded of it. And to
 “ tell

“ tell you the truth (which I take to
 “ be an argument above all the rest)
 “ Virgil has told the same thing to that
 “ purpose.”

○
 This expression from a secretary of the present time, would be considered as merely ludicrous, or at most as an ostentatious display of scholarship ; but the manners of that time were so tinged with superstition, that I cannot but suspect Cowley of having consulted on this great occasion the Virgilian lots, and to have given some credit to the answer of his oracle.

Some years afterwards, “ business,” says Sprat, “ passed of course into other
 “ hands ;” and Cowley being no longer useful at Paris, was in 1656 sent back
 C into

into England, that “ under pretence of
 “ privacy and retirement, he might
 “ take occasion of giving notice of the
 “ posture of things in this nation.”

Soon after his return to London, he
 was seized by some messengers of the
 usurping powers, who were sent out in
 quest of another man; and being exa-
 mined, was put into confinement, from
 which he was not dismissed without the
 security of a thousand pounds given by
 Dr. Scarborough.

This year he published his poems,
 with a preface, in which he seems to
 have inserted something, suppressed in
 subsequent editions, which was inter-
 preted to denote some relaxation of
 his loyalty. In this preface he declares,
 that

that “ his desire had been for some days
 “ past, and did still very vehemently
 “ continue, to retire himself to some of
 “ the American plantations, and to for-
 “ sake this world for ever.”

From the obloquy which the appearance of submission to the usurpers brought upon him, his biographer has been very diligent to clear him, and indeed it does not seem to have lessened his reputation. His wish for retirement we can easily believe to be undissembled; a man harrassed in one kingdom, and persecuted in another, who, after a course of business that employed all his days and half his nights in cyphering and decyphering, comes to his own country and steps into a prison, will

be willing enough to retire to some place of quiet, and of safety. Yet let neither our reverence for a genius, nor our pity for a sufferer, dispose us to forget that, if his activity was virtue, his retreat was cowardice.

He then took upon himself the character of Physician, still, according to Sprat, with intention “to dissemble the
“main design of his coming over,”
and, as Mr. Wood relates, “comply-
“ing with the men then in power,
“ (which was much taken notice of
“ by the royal party) he obtained an
“ order to be created Doctor of Phy-
“ sick, which being done to his mind
“ (whereby he gained the ill-will of
“ some of his friends), he went into
“ France

“ France again, having made a copy
 “ of verses on Oliver’s death.”

This is no favourable representation, yet even in this not much wrong can be discovered. How far he complied with the men in power, is to be enquired before he can be blamed. It is not said that he told them any secrets, or assisted them by intelligence, or any other act. If he only promised to be quiet, that they in whose hands he was might free him from confinement, he did what no law of society prohibits.

The man whose miscarriage in a just cause has put him in the power of his enemy may, without any violation of his integrity, regain his liberty, or preserve his life by a promise of neutrality : for

the stipulation gives the enemy nothing which he had not before ; the neutrality of a captive may be always secured by his imprisonment or death. He that is at the disposal of another, may not promise to aid him in any injurious act, because no power can compel active obedience. He may engage to do nothing, but not to do ill.

There is reason to think that Cowley promised little. It does not appear that his compliance gained him confidence enough to be trusted without security, for the bond of his bail was never cancelled ; not that it made him think himself secure, for at that dissolution of government, which followed the death of Oliver, he returned into

France, where he resumed his former station, and staid till the Restoration.

“ He continued, says his biographer, “ under these bonds till the general “ deliverance;” it is therefore to be supposed, that he did not go to France, and act again for the King without the consent of his bondsmen; that he did not shew his loyalty at the hazard of his friend, but by his friend’s permission.

Of the verses on Oliver’s death, in which Wood’s narrative seems to imply something encomiastick, there has been no appearance. There is a discourse concerning his government, indeed, with verses intermixed, but such as certainly gained its author no friends among the abettors of usurpation.

A doctor of physick however he was made at Oxford, in December 1657; and in the commencement of the Royal Society, of which an account has been published by Dr. Birch, he appears busy among the experimental philosophers with the title of Doctor Cowley.

There is no reason for supposing that he ever attempted practice; but his preparatory studies have contributed something to the honour of his country. Considering Botany as necessary to a physician, he retired into Kent to gather plants, and as the predominance of a favourite study affects all subordinate operations of the intellect, Botany in the mind of Cowley turned into poetry. He composed in Latin

several books on Plants, of which the first and second display the qualities of Herbs, in elegiac verse; the third and fourth the beauties of Flowers in various measures; and in the fifth and sixth, the uses of Trees in heroick numbers.

At the same time were produced from the same university, the two great Poets, Cowley and Milton, of dissimilar genius, of opposite principles; but concurring in the cultivation of Latin poetry, in which the English, till their works and May's poem appeared, seemed unable to contest the palm with any other of the lettered nations.

If the Latin performances of Cowley and Milton be compared, for May I

hold to be superior to both, the advantage seems to lie on the side of Cowley. Milton is generally content to express the thoughts of the ancients in their language; Cowley, without much loss of purity or elegance, accommodates the diction of Rome to his own conceptions.

At the Restoration, after all the diligence of his long service, and with consciousness not only of the merit of fidelity, but of the dignity of great abilities, he naturally expected ample preferments; and, that he might not be forgotten by his own fault, wrote a Song of Triumph. But this was a time of such general hope, that great numbers were inevitably disappointed;

and Cowley found his reward very tediously delayed. He had been promised by both Charles the first and second the Mastership of the Savoy, but "he lost it," says Wood, "by certain persons, enemies to the Muses."

The neglect of the court was not his only mortification; having by such alteration, as he thought proper fitted his old Comedy of the Guardian for the stage, he produced it to the public under the title of the "Cutter of Coleman-street." It was treated on the stage with great severity, and was afterwards censured as a satire on the king's party.

Mr. Dryden, who went with Mr. Sprat to the first exhibition, related to

Mr. Dennis, “ that when they told Cow-
 “ ley how little favour had been shewn
 “ him, he received the news of his ill
 “ success, not with so much firmness as
 “ might have been expected from so
 “ great a man.”

What firmness they expected, or what
 weakness Cowley discovered, cannot be
 known. He that misses his end will
 never be as much pleased as he that
 attains it, even when he can impute no
 part of his failure to himself; and
 when the end is to please the multi-
 tude, no man perhaps has a right, in
 things admitting of gradation and com-
 parison, to throw the whole blame upon
 his judges, and totally to exclude diffi-
 dence

dence and shame by a haughty consciousness of his own excellence.

For the rejection of this play, it is difficult now to find the reason : it certainly has, in a very great degree, the power of fixing attention and exciting merriment. From the charge of disaffection he exculpates himself in his preface, by observing how unlikely it is that, having followed the royal family through all their distresses, “ he should
 “ chuse the time of their restoration to
 “ begin a quarrel with them.” It appears, however, from the Theatrical Register of Downes the prompter, to have been popularly considered as a satire on the royalists.

That he might shorten this tedious suspense, he published his pretensions and his discontent, in an ode called "The Complaint;" in which he styles himself the *melancholy* Cowley. This met with the usual fortune of complaints, and seems to have excited more contempt than pity.

These unlucky incidents are brought, maliciously enough, together in some stanzas, written about that time, on the choice of a laureat; a mode of satire, by which, since it was first introduced by Suckling, perhaps every generation of poets has been teased.

Savoy-

Savoy-miffing Cowley came into the
court,

Making apologies for his bad play ;
Every one gave him fo good a report,
That Apollo gave heed to all he
could fay :

Nor would he have had, 'tis thought,
a rebuke,

Unless he had done some notable
folly ;

Writ verfes unjustly in praise of Sam
Tuke,

Or printed his pitiful Melancholy.

His vehement defire of retirement
now came again upon him. , “ Not
“ finding,” fays the morose Wood, “ that
“ preferment conferred upon him which
“ he

“ he expected, while others for their
“ money carried away most places, he
“ retired discontented into Surrey.”

“ He was now,” says the courtly
Sprat, “ weary of the vexations and
“ formalities of an active condition.
“ He had been perplexed with a
“ long compliance to foreign man-
“ ners. He was fatiated with the arts
“ of a court; which sort of life, though
“ his virtue made it innocent to him,
“ yet nothing could make it quiet.
“ Those were the reasons that moved
“ him to follow the violent inclination
“ of his own mind, which, in the great-
“ est throng of his former business,
“ had still called upon him, and repre-
“ sented to him the true delights of
“ soli-

“solitary studies, of temperate pleasures, and a moderate revenue below the malice and flatteries of fortune.”

So differently are things seen, and so differently are they shown; but actions are visible, though motives are secret. Cowley certainly retired; first to Barnet, and afterwards to Chertsey, in Surrey. He seems, however, to have lost part of his dread of the *hum* of men. He thought himself now safe enough from intrusion, without the defence of mountains and oceans; and instead of seeking shelter in America, wisely went only so far from the bustle of life as that he might easily find his way back, when solitude should grow tedious. His retreat was at first

D

but

but slenderly accommodated; yet he soon obtained, by the interest of the earl of St. Albans and the duke of Buckingham, such a lease of the Queen's lands as afforded him an ample income.

By the lover of virtue and of wit it will be solicitously asked, if he now was happy. Let them peruse one of his letters accidentally preserved by Peck, which I recommend to the consideration of all that may hereafter pant for solitude.

“ To Dr. Thomas Sprat.

“ Chertsey, 21 May, 1665.

“ The first night that I came hither
 “ I caught so great a cold, with a
 “ defluxion of rheum, as made me keep
 “ my

“ my chamber ten days. And, two af-
 “ ter, had fuch a bruife on my ribs
 “ with a fall, that I am yet unable to
 “ move or turn myself in my bed.
 “ This is my perfonal fortune here to
 “ begin with. And befides, I can get
 “ no money from my tenants, and have
 “ my meadows eaten up every night
 “ by cattle put in by my neighbours.
 “ What this fignifies, or may come to
 “ in time, God knows; if it be omi-
 “ nous, it can end in nothing lefs than
 “ hanging. Another misfortune has
 “ been, and ftranger than all the reft,
 “ that you have broke your word with
 “ me, and failed to come, even though
 “ you told Mr. Bois that you would.
 “ This is what they call *Monftri fimile*.

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“ I do hope to recover my late hurt
“ so farre within five or fix days
“ (though it be uncertain yet whether
“ I shall ever recover it) as to walk
“ about again. And then, methinks,
“ you and I and *the Dean* might be
“ very merry upon S. Anne’s Hill.
“ You might very conveniently come
“ hither the way of Hampton Town,
“ lying there one night. I write this
“ in pain, and can say no more : *Ver-*
“ *bun sapienti.*”

He did not long enjoy the pleasure
or suffer the uneasiness of solitude ; for
he died at the Porch-house* in Chert-

* Now in the possession of Mr. Clarke, Alder-
man of London.

sey

sey in 1667, in the 49th year of his age.

He was buried with great pomp near Chaucer and Spenser; and king Charles pronounced, "That Mr. Cowley
"had not left a better man behind
"him in England." He is represented by Dr. Sprat as the most amiable of mankind; and this posthumous praise may be safely credited, as it has never been contradicted by envy or by faction.

Such are the remarks and memorials which I have been able to add to the narrative of Dr. Sprat; who, writing when the feuds of the civil war were yet recent, and the minds of either party easily irritated, was obliged to pass over many transactions in general

expressions, and to leave curiosity often unsatisfied. What he did not tell, cannot however now be known. I must therefore recommend the perusal of his work, to which my narration can be considered only as a slender supplement.



COWLEY, like other poets who have written with narrow views, and instead of tracing intellectual pleasure to its natural sources in the mind of man, paid their court to temporary prejudices, has been at one time too much praised, and too much neglected at another.

Wit,

Wit, like all other things subject by their nature to the choice of man, has its changes and fashions, and at different times takes different forms. About the beginning of the seventeenth century appeared a race of writers that may be termed the metaphysical poets; of whom, in a criticism on the works of Cowley, the last of the race, it is not improper to give some account.

The metaphysical poets were men of learning, and to shew their learning was their whole endeavour; but, unluckily resolving to shew it in rhyme, instead of writing poetry, they only wrote verses, and very often such verses, as stood the trial of the finger better, than of the ear; for the modulation

was so imperfect; that they were only found to be verses by counting the syllables.

If the father of criticism has rightly denominated poetry τέχνη μιμητική, *an imitative art*, these writers will, without great wrong, lose their right to the name of poets; for they cannot be said to have imitated any thing; they neither copied nature nor life; neither painted the forms of matter, nor represented the operations of intellect.

Those however who deny them to be poets, allow them to be wits. Dryden confesses of himself and his contemporaries, that they fall below Donne

in wit, but maintains that they surpass him in poetry.

If Wit be well described by Pope, as being “ that which has been often “ thought, but was never before so well “ expressed,” they certainly never attained, nor ever sought it; for they endeavoured to be singular in their thoughts, and were careless of their diction. But Pope’s account of wit is undoubtedly erroneous: he depresses it below its natural dignity, and reduces it from strength of thought to happiness of language.

If by a more noble and more adequate conception that be considered as Wit, which is at once natural and new, that which, though not obvious, is
upon:

upon its first production, acknowledged to be just; if it be that, which he that never found it, wonders how he missed; to wit of this kind the metaphysical poets have seldom risen. Their thoughts are often new, but seldom natural; they are not obvious, but neither are they just; and the reader, far from wondering that he missed them, wonders more frequently by what perverseness of industry they were ever found.

But Wit, abstracted from its effects upon the hearer, may be more rigorously and philosophically considered as a kind of *discordia concors*; a combination of dissimilar images, or discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike. Of wit, thus defined, they have

more than enough. The most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together; nature and art are ransacked for illustrations, comparisons, and allusions; their learning instructs, and their subtilty surprises; but the reader commonly thinks his improvement dearly bought, and though he sometimes admires is seldom pleased.

From this account of their compositions it will be readily inferred, that they were not successful in representing or moving the affections. As they were wholly employed on something unexpected and surprising, they had no regard to that uniformity of sentiment which enables us to conceive and to excite the pains and the pleasure of other

other minds : they never enquired what, on any occasion, they should have said or done ; but wrote rather as beholders than partakers of human nature ; as Beings looking upon good and evil, impassive and at leisure ; as Epicurean deities making remarks on the actions of men, and the vicissitudes of life, without interest and without emotion. Their courtship was void of fondness, and their lamentation of sorrow. Their wish was only to say what they hoped had been never said before.

Nor was the sublime more within their reach than the pathetick ; for they never attempted that comprehension and expanse of thought which at once fills the whole mind, and of which

the first effect is sudden astonishment, and the second rational admiration. Sublimity is produced by aggregation, and littleness by dispersion. Great thoughts are always general, and consist in positions not limited by exceptions, and in descriptions not descending to minuteness. It is with great propriety that Subtlety, which in its original import means exility of particles, is taken in its metaphorical meaning for nicety of distinction. Those writers who lay on the watch for novelty could have little hope of greatness; for great things cannot have escaped former observation. Their attempts were always analytick; they broke every image into fragments; and could no more repre-

sent,

sent, by their slender conceits and laboured particularities, the prospects of nature, or the scenes of life, than he, who dissects a sun-beam with a prism, can exhibit the wide effulgence of a summer noon.

What they wanted however of the sublime, they endeavoured to supply by hyperbole; their amplification had no limits; they left not only reason but fancy behind them; and produced combinations of confused magnificence, that not only could not be credited, but could not be imagined.

Yet great labour, directed by great abilities, is never wholly lost: if they frequently threw away their wit upon false conceits, they likewise sometimes

struck out unexpected truth : if their conceits were far-fetched, they were often worth the carriage. To write on their plan, it was at least necessary to read and think. No man could be born a metaphysical poet, nor assume the dignity of a writer, by descriptions copied from descriptions, by imitations borrowed from imitations, by traditional imagery, and hereditary similes, by readiness of rhyme, and volubility of syllables.

In perusing the works of this race of authours, the mind is exercised either by recollection or inquiry ; either something already learned is to be retrieved, or something new is to be examined. If their greatness seldom elevates, their

acute-

acuteness often surprises; if the imagination is not always gratified, at least the powers of reflection and comparison are employed; and in the mass of materials which ingenious absurdity has thrown together, genuine wit and useful knowledge may be sometimes found, buried perhaps in grossness of expression, but useful to those who know their value; and such as, when they are expanded to perspicuity, and polished to elegance, may give lustre to works which have more propriety, though less copiousness of sentiment.

This kind of writing, which was, I believe, borrowed from Marino and his followers, had been recommended by

by the example of Donne; a man of very extensive and various knowledge; and by Jonson, whose manner resembled that of Donne more in the ruggedness of his lines than in the cast of his sentiments.

When their reputation was high, they had undoubtedly more imitators, than time has left behind. Their immediate successors, of whom any remembrance can be said to remain, were Suckling, Waller, Denham, Cowley, Cleveland, and Milton. Denham and Waller sought another way to fame, by improving the harmony of our numbers. Milton tried the metaphysick stile only in his lines upon Hobson the Carrier. Cowley adopted it, and excelled his predecessors,

cessors, having as much sentiment, and more musick. Suckling neither improved versification, nor abounded in conceits. The fashionable stile remained chiefly with Cowley; Suckling could not reach it, and Milton disdained it.

Critical remarks are not easily understood without examples; and I have therefore collected instances of the modes of writing by which this species of poets, for poets they were called by themselves and their admirers, was eminently distinguished.

AS the authors of this race were perhaps more desirous of being admired than understood, they sometimes drew their conceits from recesses of learning

not



not very much frequented by common readers of poetry. Thus Cowley on *Knowledge*:

The sacred tree midst the fair orchard
grew;

The phoenix Truth did on it rest,
And built his perfum'd nest,

That right Porphyrian tree which did
true Logick shew.

Each leaf did learned notions give,
And th' apples were demonstrative:

So clear their colour and divine,
The very shade they cast did other lights
outshine.

On ~~Anacreon~~ continuing a lover in
his old age:

Love was with thy life entwin'd,
Close as heat with fire is join'd,

A powerful brand prescrib'd the date
 Of thine, like Meleager's fate.
 Th' antiperistasis of age
 More inflam'd thy amorous rage.

In the following verses we have an allusion to a Rabbinical opinion concerning Manna :

Variety I ask not : give me one
 To live perpetually upon.
 The person Love does to us fit,
 Like manna, has the taste of all in it.

Thus *Donne* shews his medicinal knowledge in some encomiastick verses :

In

In every thing there naturally grows
 A Balsamum to keep it fresh and new,
 If 'twere not injur'd by extrinſique
 blows;

Your youth and beauty are this balm in
 you.

But, you of learning and religion,
 And virtue and ſuch ingredients, have
 made

A mithridate, whoſe operation
 Keeps off, or cures what can be done or
 ſaid.

Though the following lines of Donne,
 on the laſt night of the year, have ſome-
 thing in them too ſcholaltick, they are
 not inelegant :

This twilight of two years, not past nor
next,

Some emblem is of me; or I of this,
Who meteor-like, of stuff and form per-
plext,

Whose what and where, in disputation
is,

If I should call me any thing, should
miss.

I sum the years and me, and find me not
Debtor to th' old, nor creditor to th'
new,

That cannot say, my thanks I have forgot,
Nor trust I this with hopes; and yet
scarce true

This bravery is, since these times
shew'd me you.

DONNE.

Yet more abstruse and profound is
Donne's reflection upon Man as a Micro-
 cosm :

If men be worlds, there is in every one
 Something to answer in some proportion.
 All the world's riches : and in good men,
 this

Virtue, our form's form, and our soul's
 soul is.

OF thoughts so far-fetched, as to be
 not only unexpected, but unnatural,
 all their books are full.

To a Lady, who wrote poesies for rings.
 They, who above do various circles find,
 Say, like a ring th' æquator heaven does
 bind.

When heaven shall be adorn'd by thee,
 (Which then more heav'n than 'tis, will
 be)

'Tis thou must write the poesy there,
 For it wanteth one as yet,
 Tho' the sun pass through't twice a year,
 The sun, which is esteem'd the god of
 Wit.

COWLEY.

The difficulties which have been
 raised about identity in philosophy, are
 by Cowley, with still more perplexity ap-
 plied to Love :

Five years ago (says story) I lov'd you,
 For which you call me most inconstant
 now ;

Pardon

Pardon me, madam, you mistake the
man ;

For I am not the same that I was then ;
No flesh is now the same 'twas then in
me,

And that my mind is chang'd yourself
may see.

The same thoughts to retain still, and
intent

Were more inconstant far ; for accidents
Must of all things most strangely in-
constant prove,

If from one subject they t'another move :
My members then, the father members
were

From whence these take their birth,
which now are here.

If

If then this body love what th'other did,
 'Twere incest, which by nature is for-
 bid.

The love of different women is, in
 geographical poetry, compared to tra-
 vel through different countries :

Haft thou not found, each woman's
 breast

(The lands where thou hast travelled)
 Either by savages possess'd,
 Or wild, and uninhabited ?

What joy could'st take, or what repose
 In countries so uncivilis'd as those ?
 Lust, the scorching dog-star, here
 Rages with immoderate heat ;
 Whilst Pride, the rugged Northern
 Bear,

In others makes the cold too great.

And where these are temperate known,
 The soil's all barren sand, or rocky
 stone..

COWLEY.

A lover, burnt up by his affection, is
 compared to Egypt :

The fate of Egypt I sustain,
 And never feel the dew of rain,
 From clouds which in the head appear;
 But all my too much moisture owe,
 To overflowings of the heart below..

COWLEY.

The lover supposes his lady ac-
 quainted with the ancient laws of au-
 gury and rites of sacrifice :

And yet this death of mine, I fear,
 Will ominous to her appear :

60 C O W L E Y.

When found in every other part,
Her sacrifice is found without an heart.

For the last tempest of my death
Shall sigh out that too, with my breath.

That the chaos was harmonised has
been recited of old; but whence the
different sounds arose, remained for a
modern to discover :

Th' ungovern'd parts no correspon-
dence knew,

An artless war from thwarting motions
grew ;

Till they to number and fixt rules were
brought.

Water and air he for the tenor chose,
Earth made the Base, the Treble flame
arose.

COWLEY.

The

The tears of lovers are always of great poetical account; but Donne has extended them into worlds. If the lines are not easily understood, they may be read again.

On a round ball
A workman, that hath copies by, can lay
An Europe, Afric, and an Asia,
And quickly make that, which was nothing, all.

So doth each tear,
Which thee doth wear,
A globe, yea world, by that impressiion
grow,
Till thy tears mixt with mine do overflow
This world, by waters sent from thee
my heaven dissolved so.

On

On reading the following lines the reader may perhaps cry out—*Confusion worse confounded.*

Here lies a she sun, and a he moon here,
 She gives the best light to his sphere,
 Or each is both, and all, and so
 They unto one another nothing owe.

DONNE.

Who but Donne would have thought
 that a good man is a telescope?

Tho' God be our true glass, thro' which
 we see

All, since the being of all things is he,
 Yet are the trunks, which do to us
 derive

Things, in proportion fit, by perspective
 Deeds

Deeds of good men; for by their living
here,

Virtues, indeed remote, seem to be near.

Who would imagine it possible that
in a very few lines so many remote
ideas could be brought together :

Since 'tis my doom, Love's underfhrieve,

Why this reprieve ?

Why doth my She Advowſon fly

Incumbency ?

To ſell thyſelf doſt thou intend

By candle's end,

And hold the contraſt thus in doubt,

Life's taper out ?

Think but how ſoon the market fails,

Your ſex lives faſter than the males ;

As

As if to measure age's span,
 The sober Julian were th' account of
 man,

Whilst you live by the fleet Gregorian.

CLEVELAND.

OF enormous and disgusting hyberboles, these may be examples :

By every wind, that comes this way,
 Send me at least a sigh or two,
 Such and so many I'll repay
 As shall themselves make winds to get
 to you.

COWLEY.

In tears I'll waste these eyes
 By love so vainly fed ;
 So lust of old the Deluge punished.

COWLEY.

All arm'd in brass, the richest dress of
war,

(A dismal glorious fight) he shone afar.

The sun himself started with sudden
fright,

To see his beams return so dismal
bright.

COWLEY.

An universal consternation :

His bloody eyes he hurls round, his
sharp paws

Tear up the ground ; then runs he wild
about,

Lashing his angry tail and roaring out.

Beasts creep into their dens, and tremble
there ;

Trees, tho' no wind is stirring, shake
with fear ;

F

Silence

Silence and horror fill the place around:
 Echo itself dares scarce repeat the sound.

COWLEY.

THEIR fictions were often violent
 and unnatural.

Of his Mistress bathing :

The fish around her crouded, as they do
 To the false light that treach'rous fishers
 shew,

And all with as much ease might taken be,
 As she at first took me :
 For ne'er did light so clear
 Among the waves appear,
 Tho' ev'ry night the sun himself set
 there

COWLEY.

The

The poetical effect of a Lover's name
upon glass :

My name engrav'd herein,
Doth contribute my firmness to this glass;
Which, ever since that charm, hath
been
As hard, as that which grav'd it, was.

DONNE.

THEIR conceits were sometimes
flight and trifling :

On an inconstant woman.

He enjoys thy calmy sunshine now,
And no breath stirring hears,
In the clear heaven of thy brow,
No smallest cloud appears.

F 2

He

He sees thee gentle, fair and gay,
And trusts the faithless April of thy May.

COWLEY.

Upon a paper written with the juice
of lemon, and read by the fire :

Nothing yet in thee is seen,

But when a genial heat warms thee
within,

A new-born wood of various lines there
grows ;

Here buds an L, and there a B,

Here sprouts a V, and there a T,

And all the flourishing letters stand in
rows.

COWLEY.

AS they fought only for novelty, they
did not much enquire whether their
allu-

allusions were to things high or low, elegant or gross; whether they compared the little to the great, or the great to the little.

Phyſick and Chirurgery for a Lover.

Gently, ah gently, madam, touch

The wound, which you yourſelf have
made;

That pain muſt needs be very much,

Which makes me of your hand afraid.

Cordials of pity give me now,

For I too weak for purgings grow.

COWLEY.

The World and a Clock.

Mahol, th' inferior world's fantaſtic face,
Thro' all the turns of matter's maze did
trace;

70 E D W L D V.

Great Nature's well-set clock in pieces
took;

On all the springs and smallest wheels
did look

Of life and motion; and with equal art
Made up again the whole of every part.

COWLEY.

A coal-pit has not often found its
poet; but that it may not want its due
honour, Cleveland has paralleled it with
the Sun:

The moderate value of our guiltless ore,
Makes no man atheist, nor no woman
whore;

Yet why should hallow'd vestals sacred
shrine,

Deserve more honour than a flaming
mine?

These
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C O W - L E Y. 71

These pregnant wombs of heat would
fitter be

Than a few embers for a deity.

Had he our pits, the Persian would
admire

No fun, but warm's devotion at our fire:
He'd leave the trotting whipster, and
prefer

Our profound Vulcan 'bove that wag-
goner.

For wants he heat? or light? or would
have store?

Or both? 'tis here: and what can suns
give more?

Nay, what's the sun, but in a different
name,

A coal-pit rampant, or a mine on flame!

F 4

Then

Then let this truth reciprocally run,
 The fun's heaven's coalery, and coals
 our fun.

Death, a Voyage :

No family

Ere rigg'd a foul for heaven's discovery,
 With whom more venturers might boldly
 dare

Venture their stakes, with him in joy to
 share.

DONNE.

THEIR thoughts and expressions
 were sometimes grossly absurd, and
 such as no figures or licence can recon-
 cile to the understanding.

A lover neither dead nor alive :

Then down I laid my head,

Down on cold earth; and for a while was
dead,

And my freed soul to a strange some-
where fled :

Ah sottish soul, said I,

When back to its cage again I saw it
fly :

Fool to resume her broken chain !

And row her galley here again !

Fool, to that body to return

Where it condemn'd and destin'd is to
burn !

Once dead, how can it be,

Death should a thing so pleasant seem
to thee,

That thou shouldst come to live it o'er
again in me ?

COWLEY.

A lover's

A lover's heart, a hand grenado.
 Wo to her stubborn heart, if once mine
 come
 Into the self-same room,
 'Twill tear and blow up all within,
 Like a grenado shot into a magazin.
 Then shall love keep the ashes, and torn
 parts,
 Of both our broken hearts :
 Shall out of both one new one make ;
 From her's th' allay ; from mine, the
 metal take.

COWLEY.

The poetical Propagation of Light.
 The Prince's favour is diffus'd o'er all,
 From which all fortunes, names and na-
 tures fall ;

Then

Then from those wombs of stars, the
 Bride's bright eyes,

At every glance; a constellation flies,
 And sows the court with stars, and doth
 prevent

In light and power, the all-ey'd firma-
 ment;

First her eye kindles other ladies' eyes,
 Then from their beams their jewels
 lustres rise;

And from their jewels torches do take
 fire,

And all is warmth, and light, and good
 desire.

DONNE.

THEY were in very little care to clothe
 their notions with elegance of dress,
 5 and

and therefore miss the notice and the praise which are often gained by those, who think less, but are more diligent to adorn their thoughts.

That a mistress beloved is fairer in idea than in reality, is by Cowley thus expressed :

Thou in my fancy dost much higher
stand,

Than women can be plac'd by Nature's
hand ;

And I must needs, I'm sure, a loser
be,

To change thee, as thou'rt there, for
very thee.

That prayer and labour should co-operate, are thus taught by Donne :

In none but us, are such mixt engines
found,

As hands of double office : for the
ground

We till with them ; and them to
heav'n we raise ;

Who prayerless labours, or without
this, prays,

Doth but one half, that's none.

By the same author, a common topick,
the danger of procrastination, is thus
illustrated :

—That which I should have begun

In my youth's morning, now late must
be done ;

And I, as giddy travellers must do,

Which

Which stray or sleep all day, and having
lost

Light and strength, dark and tir'd must
then ride post.

All that Man has to do is to live and
die; the sum of humanity is compre-
hended by Donne in the following
lines :

Think in how poor a prison thou didst
lie,

After, enabled but to suck and cry.

Think, when 'twas grown to most,
'twas a poor inn,

A province pack'd up in two yards
of skin,

And

And that usurp'd, or threaten'd with a
rage

Of sicknesses, or their true mother;
age.

But think that death hath now en-
franchis'd thee ;

Thou hast thy expansion now, and
liberty ;

Think, that a rusty piece discharg'd
is flown

In pieces, and the bullet is his own,
And freely flies : this to thy soul allow,
Think thy shell broke, think thy soul
hatch'd but now.

THEY were sometimes indelicate and
disgusting. Cowley thus apostro-
phises beauty :

—Thou

—Thou tyrant, which leav'ft no man
free!

Thou fubtle thief, from whom nought
fafe can be!

Thou murth'rer, which haft killed, and
devil, which would'ft damn me.

Thus he addreffes his Miftrefs:

Thou, who in many a propriety,

So truly art the fun to me,

Add one more likenefs, which I'm
fure you can,

And let me and my fun beget a man.

Thus he represents the meditations
of a Lover:

Tho' in thy thoughts fcarce any trafts
have been

So much as of original fin,

Such

Such charms thy beauty wears as might
Desires in dying confest saints excite.

Thou with strange adultery
Dost in each breast a brothel keep ;
Awake, all men do lust for thee,
And some enjoy thee when they sleep.

The true taste of tears.

Hither with crystal vials, lovers, come,
And take my tears, which are love's
wine,
And try your mistress' tears at home,
For all are false, that taste not just like
mine.

DONNE.

This is yet more indelicate :

G

As

As the sweet sweat of roses in a still,
As that which from chaf'd musk-cat's
pores doth trill,

As the almighty balm of th' early
East,

Such are the sweet drops of my mistress'
breast.

And on her neck her skin such lustre
sets,

They seem no sweat drops, but pearl
coronets :

Rank sweaty froth thy mistress' brow
defiles.

DONNE.

THEIR expressions sometimes raise
horror, when they intend perhaps
to be pathetic :

As

As men in hell are from diseases free,
 So from all other ills am I,
 Free from their known formality :
 But all pains eminently lie in thee.

COWLEY.

THEY were not always strictly curious, whether the opinions from which they drew their illustrations were true ; it was enough that they were popular. Bacon remarks, that some falsehoods are continued by tradition, because they supply commodious allusions.

It gave a piteous groan, and so it broke ;
 In vain it something would have spoke :
 The love within too strong for't was,
 Like poison put into a Venice-glass.

COWLEY.

IN forming descriptions they looked out not for images, but for conceits. Night has been a common subject, which poets have contended to adorn. Dryden's Night is well known; Donne's is as follows :

Thou see'st me here at midnight, now
all rest :

Time's dead low-water; when all minds
divest

To-morrow's business, when the labourers have

Such rest in bed, that their last church-yard grave,

Subject to change, will scarce be a type
of this,

Now when the client, whose last hearing is

To-morrow, sleeps; when the con-
demned man,

Who when he opens his eyes, must shut
them then

Again by death, altho' sad watch he
keep,

Doth practise dying by a little sleep,

Thou at this midnight seest me.

IT must be however confessed of these
writers, that if they are upon common
subjects often unnecessarily and unpoeti-
cally subtle; yet where scholastick spe-
culation can be properly admitted, their
copiousness and acuteness may justly be
admired. What Cowley has written
upon Hope, shews an unequalled ferti-
lity of invention :

Hope, whose weak being ruin'd is,
 Alike if it succeed, and if it miss;
 Whom good or ill does equally confound,
 And both the horns of Fate's dilemma
 wound.

Vain shadow, which dost vanish quite,
 Both at full noon and perfect night!
 The stars have not a possibility
 Of blessing thee;
 If things then from their end we happy
 call,
 'Tis Hope is the most hopeless thing of
 all.

Hope, thou bold taster of delight,
 Who, whilst thou should'st but taste,
 devour'st it quite!

Thou

C O W L E Y, 87

Thou bring'st us an estate, yet leav'st
us poor,

By clogging it with legacies before!

The joys which we entire should
wed,

Come deflow'r'd virgins to our bed ;
Good fortunes without gain imported be,

Such mighty custom's paid to thee :
For joy, like wine, kept close does bet-
ter taste ;

If it take air before, its spirits waste.

To the following comparison of a
man that travels, and his wife that stays
at home, with a pair of compasses, it may
be doubted whether absurdity or inge-
nuity has the better claim.

• G 4

Our

W C O W L E Y.

Our two souls therefore, which are one,
Tho' I must go, endure not yet
A breach, 'but an expansion,
Like gold to airy thinness beat.

If they be two, they are two so
As stiff twin-compasses are two,
Thy soul the fixt foot, makes no show
To move, but doth, if th' other do.

And tho' it in the centre sit,
Yet when the other far doth roam,
It leans, and hearkens after it,
And grows erect, as that comes home.

Such wilt thou be to me, who must
Like th' other foot, obliquely run.
Thy firmness makes my circle just,
And makes me end, where I begun.

DONNE.

In

C O W L E Y.

In all these examples it is apparent, that whatever is improper or vitious; is produced by a voluntary deviation from nature in pursuit of something new and strange; and that the writers fail to give delight, by their desire of exciting admiration.

HAVING thus endeavoured to exhibit a general representation of the stile and sentiments of the metaphysical poets, it is now proper to examine particularly the works of Cowley, who was almost the last of that race, and undoubtedly the best.

His Miscellanies contain a collection of short compositions, written some as they were dictated by a mind at leisure, and

and some as they were called forth by different occasions; with great variety of stile and sentiment, from burlesque levity to awful grandeur. Such an assemblage of diversified excellence no other poet has hitherto afforded. To choose the best, among many good, is one of the most hazardous attempts of criticism. I know not whether Scaliger himself has persuaded many readers to join with him in his preference of the two favourite odes, which he estimates in his raptures at the value of a kingdom. I will however venture to recommend Cowley's first piece, which ought to be inscribed *To my Muse*, for want of which the second couplet is without reference. When the title is added,

there

there will still remain a defect; for every piece ought to contain in itself whatever is necessary to make it intelligible. Pope has some epitaphs without names, which are therefore epitaphs to be let, occupied indeed for the present, but hardly appropriated.

The ode on Wit is almost without a rival. It was about the time of Cowley that *Wit*, which had been till then used for *Intellection*, in contradistinction to *Will*, took the meaning, whatever it be, which it now bears.

Of all the passages in which poets have exemplified their own precepts, none will easily be found of greater excellence than that in which Cowley condemns exuberance of Wit :

Yet

92 C O W L E Y.

Yet 'tis not to adorn and gild each part,
 That shews more cost than art.
 Jewels at nose and lips but ill appear;
 Rather than all things wit, let none
 be there.

Several lights will not be seen,
 If there be nothing else between.
 Men doubt, because they stand so thick
 i' th' sky,
 If those be stars which paint the galaxy.

In his verses to lord Falkland, whom
 every man of his time was proud to
 praise, there are, as there must be in
 all Cowley's compositions, some striking
 thoughts; but they are not well-
 wrought. His elegy on Sir Henry
 Wotton is vigorous and happy, the
 series

series of thoughts is easy and natural, and the conclusion, though a little weakened by the intrusion of Alexander, is elegant and forcible.

It may be remarked, that in this Elegy, and in most of his encomiastick poems, he has forgotten or neglected to name his heroes.

In his poem on the death of Hervey, there is much praise, but little passion, a very just and ample delineation of such virtues as a studious privacy admits, and such intellectual excellence as a mind not yet called forth to action can display. He knew how to distinguish, and how to commend the qualities of his companion; but when he wishes to make us weep, he forgets to

weep

weep himself, and diverts his sorrow by imagining how his crown of bays if he had it, would *crackle* in the *fire*. It is the odd fate of this thought to be worse for being true. The bay-leaf crackles remarkably as it burns; as therefore this property was not assigned it by chance, the mind must be thought sufficiently at ease that could attend to such minuteness of physiology. But the power of Cowley is not to move the affections, but to exercise the understanding.

The *Chronicle* is a composition unrivalled and alone: such gaiety of fancy, such facility of expression, such varied similitude, such a succession of images, and such a dance of words, it is

is vain to expect except from Cowley. His strength always appears in his agility; his volatility is not the flutter of a light but the bound of an elastick mind. His levity never leaves his learning behind it; the moralist, the politician, and the critick, mingle their influence even in this airy frolick of genius. To such a performance Suckling could have brought the gaiety, but not the knowledge; Dryden could have supplied the knowledge, but not the gaiety.

The verses to Davenant, which are vigorously begun, and happily concluded, contain some hints of criticism very justly conceived and happily expressed. Cowley's critical abilities have

not

not been sufficiently observed : the few decisions and remarks which his prefaces and his notes on the Davides supply, were at that time accessions to English literature, and shew such skill as raises our wish for more examples.

The lines from Jersey are a very curious and pleasing specimen of the familiar descending to the burlesque.

His two metrical disquisitions *for* and *against* Reason, are no mean specimens of metaphysical poetry. The stanzas against knowledge produce little conviction. In those which are intended to exalt the human faculties, Reason has its proper task assigned it; that of judging, not of things revealed, but of the reality of revelation. In the verses *for* Reason

is

is a passage which Bentley, in the only English verses which he is known to have written, seems to have copied, though with the inferiority of an imitator.

The holy Book like the eighth sphere
does shine

With thousand lights of truth divine,
So numberless the stars that to our eye
It makes all but one galaxy :

Yet Reason must assist too ; for in seas
So vast and dangerous as these,
Our course by stars above we cannot
know

Without the compass too below.

After this says Bentley :

H

Who

Who travels in religious jars,
 Truth mix'd with error, clouds with rays,
 With Whifton wanting pyx and stars,
 In the wide ocean sinks or strays.

Cowley seems to have had, what Milton is believed to have wanted, the skill to rate his own performances by their just value, and has therefore closed his *Miscellanies* with the verses upon Crasshaw, which apparently excel all that have gone before them, and in which there are beauties which common authors may justly think not only above their attainment, but above their ambition.

To the *Miscellanies* succeed the *Anacrontiques*, or paraphrastical translations

of some little poems, which pass, however justly, under the name of Anacreon. Of those songs dedicated to festivity and gaiety, in which even the morality is voluptuous, and which teach nothing but the enjoyment of the present day, he has given rather a pleasing than a faithful representation, having retained their spriteliness, but lost their simplicity. The Anacreon of Cowley, like the Homer of Pope, has admitted the decoration of some modern graces, by which he is undoubtedly made more amiable to common readers, and perhaps, if they would honestly declare their own perceptions, to far the greater part of those whom courtesy and ignorance are content to stile the Learned.

These little pieces will be found more finished in their kind than any other of Cowley's works. The diction shews nothing of the mould of time, and the sentiments are at no great distance from our present habitudes of thought. Real mirth must be always natural, and nature is uniform. Men have been wise in very different modes; but they have always laughed the same way.

Levity of thought naturally produced familiarity of language, and the familiar part of language continues long the same: the dialogue of comedy, when it is transcribed from popular manners and real life, is read from age to age with equal pleasure. The artifices of inversion by which the estab-

lished



blished order of words is changed, or of innovation, by which new words or new meanings of words are introduced, is practised not by those who talk to be understood, but by those who write to be admired.

The Anacreontiques therefore of Cowley give now all the pleasure which they ever gave. If he was formed by nature for one kind of writing more than for another, his power seems to have been greatest in the familiar and the festive.

The next class of his poems is called *The Mistress*, of which it is not necessary to select any particular pieces for praise or censure. They have all the same beauties and faults, and nearly in the same proportion. They are written

with exuberance of wit, and with copiousness of learning; and it is truly asserted by Sprat, that the plenitude of the writer's knowledge flows in upon his page, so that the reader is commonly surpris'd into some improvement. But, considered as the verses of a lover, no man that has ever loved will much commend them. They are neither courtly nor pathetick, have neither gallantry nor fondness. His praises are too far-sought, and too hyperbolical, either to express love or to excite it: every stanza is crouded with darts and flames, with wounds and death, with mingled souls, and with broken hearts.

The principal artifice by which *The Mistress* is filled with conceits is very

copious-

copiously displayed by Addison. Love is by Cowley, as by other poets, expressed metaphorically by flame and fire; and that which is true of real fire is said of love, or figurative fire, the same word in the same sentence retaining both significations. Thus, “ob-
 “serving the cold regard of his mis-
 “tress’s eyes, and at the same time their
 “power of producing love in him, he
 “considers them as burning-glasses made
 “of ice. Finding himself able to live
 “in the greatest extremities of love, he
 “concludes the torrid zone to be ha-
 “bitable. Upon the dying of a tree,
 “on which he had cut his loves, he
 “observes, that his flames had burnt
 “up and withered the tree.”

These conceits Addison calls mixed wit; that is, wit which consists of thoughts true in one sense of the expression, and false in the other. Addison's representation is sufficiently indulgent. That confusion of images may entertain for a moment; but being unnatural, it soon grows wearisome. Cowley delighted in it, as much as if he had invented it; but, not to mention the ancients, he might have found it full-blown in modern Italy. Thus Sannazaro;

*Aspice quam variis distringar Vespia curis,
Uror, & heu! nostro manat ab igne liquor;
Sum Nilus, sumque Ætna simul; restrin-
gite flammæ*

*O lacrimæ, aut lacrimas ebibe flamma
meas.*

One of the severe theologians of that time censured him as having published *a book of profane and lascivious Verses*. From the charge of profaneness, the constant tenour of his life, which seems to have been eminently virtuous, and the general tendency of his opinions, which discover no irreverence of religion, must defend him; but that the accusation of lasciviousness is unjust, the perusal of his works will sufficiently evince.

Cowley's *Mistress* has no power of seduction: "she plays round the head, but comes not at the heart." Her beauty and absence, her kindness and cruelty, her disdain and inconstancy, produce no correspondence of emotion. His poetical account of the virtues of plants.

plants, and colours of flowers, is not perused with more sluggish frigidity. The compositions are such as might have been written for penance by a hermit, or for hire by a philosophical rhymers who had only heard of another sex; for they turn the mind only on the writer, whom, without thinking on a woman but as the subject for a task, we sometimes esteem as learned, and sometimes despise as trifling, always admire as ingenious, and always condemn as unnatural.

The Pindarique Odes are now to be considered; a species of composition, which Cowley thinks Pancirolus might have counted *in his list of the lost inventions of antiquity*, and which he has made

made a bold and vigorous attempt to recover.

The purpose with which he has paraphrased an Olympick and Nemeæan Ode, is by himself sufficiently explained. His endeavour was not to shew *precisely what Pindar spoke, but his manner of speaking*. He was therefore not at all restrained to his expressions, nor much to his sentiments; nothing was required of him, but not to write as Pindar would not have written.

Of the Olympick Ode the beginning is, I think, above the original in elegance, and the conclusion below it in strength. The connection is supplied with great perspicuity, and the thoughts, which to a reader of less skill seem

thrown

thrown together by chance, are concatenated without any abruption. Though the English ode cannot be called a translation, it may be very properly consulted as a commentary.

The spirit of Pindar is indeed not every where equally preserved. The following pretty lines are not such as his *deep mouth* was used to pour :

Great Rhea's son,
 If in Olympus' top where thou
 Sitt'st to behold thy sacred shew,
 If in Alpheus silver flight,
 If in my verse thou take delight,
 My verse, great Rhea's son, which is
 Lofty as that, and smooth as this.

In

In the Nemeæan Ode the reader must, in mere justice to Pindar, observe that whatever is said of *the original new moon, her tender forehead and her horns*, is superadded by his paraphrast, who has many other plays of words and fancy unsuitable to the original, as,

The table free for every guest,
No doubt will thee admit,
And feast more upon thee, than thou on
it.

He sometimes extends his author's thoughts without improving them. In the Olympionick an oath is mentioned in a single word, and Cowley spends three lines in swearing by the *Castalian Stream*. We are told of Theron's bounty,

ty, with a hint that he had enemies, which Cowley thus enlarges in rhyming prose :

But in this thankless world the giver
Is envied even by the receiver ;
'Tis now the cheap and frugal fashion
Rather to hide than own the obligation :

Nay, 'tis much worse than so ;
It now an artifice does grow
Wrongs and injuries to do,
Lest men should think we owe.

It is hard to conceive that a man of the first rank in learning and wit, when he was dealing out such minute morality in such feeble diction, could imagine, either waking or dreaming, that he imitated Pindar.

In

In the following odes, where Cowley chooses his own subjects, he sometimes rises to dignity truly Pindarick; and, if some deficiencies of language be forgiven, his strains are such as those of the Theban bard were to his contemporaries :

Begin the song, and strike the living
lyre :

Lo how the years to come, a numerous
and well-fitted quire,

All hand in hand do decently advance,
And to my song with smooth and equal
measure dance ;

While the dance lasts, how long soe'er
it be,

My musick's voice shall bear it company ;
Till

Till all gentle notes be drown'd
In the last trumpet's dreadful sound.

After such enthusiasm, who will not lament to find the poet conclude with lines like these !

But stop, my Muse—
Hold thy Pindarick Pegasus closely in,
Which does to rage begin—
—'Tis an unruly and a hard-mouth'd
horse—

'Twill no unskilful touch endure,
But flings writer and reader too that fits
not sure.

The fault of Cowley, and perhaps of all the writers of the metaphysical race, is that of pursuing his thoughts to their last ramifications, by which he loses the

the grandeur of generality ; for of the greatest things the parts are little ; what is little can be but pretty, and by claiming dignity becomes ridiculous. Thus all the power of description is destroyed by a scrupulous enumeration ; and the force of metaphors is lost, when the mind by the mention of particulars is turned more upon the original than the secondary sense, more upon that from which the illustration is drawn than that to which it is applied.

Of this we have a very eminent example in the ode entitled *The Muse*, who goes to *take the air* in an intellectual chariot, to which he harnesses Fancy and Judgement, Wit and Eloquence, Memory and Invention ; how he

distinguished Wit from Fancy, or how Memory could properly contribute to Motion, he has not explained : we are however content to suppose that he could have justified his own fiction, and wish to see the Muse begin her career ; but there is yet more to be done.

Let the postilion Nature mount, and let
The coachman Art be set ;

And let the airy footmen, running all
beside,

Make a long row of goodly pride ;
Figures, conceits, raptures, and sentences,

In a well-worded dress,
And innocent loves, and pleasant truths,
and useful lies,

In all their gaudy liveries.

Every mind is now disgusted with
this cumber of magnificence; yet I cannot
refuse myself the four next lines :

Mount, glorious queen, thy travelling
throne,

And bid it to put on ;

For long though cheerful is the way,
And life alas allows but one ill winter's
day.

In the same ode, celebrating the power
of the Muse, he gives her prescience,
or, in poetical language, the foresight
of events hatching in futurity ; but
having once an egg in his mind, he cannot
forbear to shew us that he knows
what an egg contains :

Thou into the close nests of time do'st
peep,

And there with piercing eye
Through the firm shell and the thick
white do'st spy

Years to come a-forming lie,
Close in their sacred fecundine asleep.

The same thought is more generally,
and therefore more poetically, expressed
by Casimir, a writer who has many of
the beauties and faults of Cowley :

Omnibus mundi Dominator horis
Aptat urgendas per inane pennas,
Pars adhuc nido latet, & futuros
Crescit in annos.

Cowley, whatever was his subject,
seems to have been carried, by a kind
of

of destiny, to the light and the familiar, or to conceits which require still more ignoble epithets. A slaughter in the Red Sea, *new dies the waters name*; and England, during the Civil War, was *Albion no more, nor to be named from white*. It is surely by some fascination not easily surmounted, that a writer, professing to revive *the noblest and highest writing in verse*, makes this address to the new year :

Nay, if thou lov'st me, gentle year,
 Let not so much as love be there,
 Vain fruitless love I mean ; for, gentle
 year,
 Although I fear,
 There's of this caution little need,
 Yet, gentle year, take heed

How thou dost make
 Such a mistake ;
 Such love I mean alone
 As by thy cruel predecessors has been
 shewn ;
 For, tho' I have too much cause to
 doubt it,
 I fain would try, for once, if life can
 live without it.

The reader of this will be inclined to
 cry out with Prior—

—*Ye Criticks, say,*

How poor to this was Pindar's stile !

Even those who cannot perhaps find in
 the Isthmian or Nemeæan songs what An-
 tiquity has disposed them to expect, will
 at least see that they are ill represented

by

by such puny poetry ; and all will determine that if this be the old Theban strain, it is not worthy of revival.

To the disproportion and incongruity of Cowley's sentiments must be added the uncertainty and looseness of his measures. He takes the liberty of using in any place a verse of any length, from two syllables to twelve. The verses of Pindar have, as he observes, very little harmony to a modern ear ; yet by examining the syllables we perceive them to be regular, and have reason enough for supposing that the ancient audiences were delighted with the sound. The imitator ought therefore to have adopted what he found, and to have added what was wanting ; to have preserved a con-

stant return of the same numbers, and to have supplied smoothness of transition and continuity of thought.

It is urged by Dr. Sprat, that the *irregularity of numbers is the very thing which makes that kind of poesy fit for all manner of subjects*. But he should have remembered, that what is fit for every thing can fit nothing well. The great pleasure of verse arises from the known measure of the lines, and uniform structure of the stanzas, by which the voice is regulated, and the memory relieved.

If the Pindarick stile be, what Cowley thinks it, *the highest and noblest kind of writing in verse*, it can be adapted only to high and noble subjects; and it will

will not be easy to reconcile the poet with the critick, or to conceive how that can be the highest kind of writing in verse, which, according to Sprat, *is chiefly to be preferred for its near affinity to prose.*

This lax and lawless versification so much concealed the deficiencies of the barren, and flattered the laziness of the idle, that it immediately overspread our books of poetry ; all the boys and girls caught the pleasing fashion, and they that could do nothing else could write like Pindar. The rights of antiquity were invaded, and disorder tried to break into the Latin : a poem on the Sheldonian Theatre, in which all kinds of verse are shaken together, is unhappily

pily inserted in the *Musa Anglicana*. Pindarism prevailed above half a century; but at last died gradually away, and other imitations supply its place.

The Pindarique Odes have so long enjoyed the highest degree of poetical reputation, that I am not willing to dismiss them with unabated censure; and surely though the mode of their composition be erroneous, yet many parts deserve at least that admiration which is due to great comprehension of knowledge, and great fertility of fancy. The thoughts are often new, and often striking; but the greatness of one part is disgraced by the littleness of another, and total negligence of language gives the noblest conceptions the

ap-

appearance of a fabrick august in the plan, but mean in the materials. Yet surely those verses are not without a just claim to praise; of which it may be said with truth, that no man but Cowley could have written them.

The *Davideis* now remains to be considered; a poem which the author designed to have extended to twelve books, merely, as he makes no scruple of declaring, because the *Æneid* had that number; but he had leisure or perseverance only to write the third part. Epick poems have been left unfinished by Virgil, Statius, Spenser, and Cowley. That we have not the whole *Davideis* is, however, not much to be regretted; for in this undertaking Cowley is, tacitly

at

at least, confessed to have miscarried. There are not many examples of so great a work, produced by an author generally read, and generally praised, that has crept through a century with so little regard. Whatever is said of Cowley, is meant of his other works. Of the *Davideis* no mention is made; it never appears in books, nor emerges in conversation. By the *Spectator* it has once been quoted, and by *Rymer* it has once been praised; nor do I recollect much other notice from its publication till now, in the whole succession of English literature.

Of this obscurity and neglect, if the reason be inquired, it will be found partly in the choice of the subject,
and

and partly in the performance of the work.

Sacred History has been always read with submissive reverence, and an imagination over-awed and controlled. We have been accustomed to acquiesce in the nakedness and simplicity of the authentick narrative, and to repose on its veracity with such humble confidence, as suppresses curiosity. We go with the historian as he goes, and stop with him when he stops. All amplification is frivolous and vain; all addition to that which is already sufficient for the purposes of religion, seems not only useless, but in some degree profane.

Such events as were produced by the visible interposition of Divine Power
 are

are above the power of human genius to dignify. The miracle of Creation, however it may teem with images, is best described with little diffusion of language: *He spake the word, and they were made.*

We are told that Saul *was troubled with an evil spirit*: from this Cowley takes an opportunity of describing hell, and telling the history of Lucifer, who was, he says,

Once general of a gilded host of sprites,
Like Hesper leading forth the spangled
nights;

But down like lightning, which him
struck, he came,

And roar'd at his first plunge into the
flame.

Lucifer makes a speech to the inferior agents of mischief, in which there is something of heathenism, and therefore of impropriety; and, to give efficacy to his words, concludes by *lashing his breast with his long tail*. Envy, after a pause, steps out, and among other declarations of her zeal utters these lines :

Do thou but threat, loud storms shall
make reply,

And thunder echo to the trembling
sky.

Whilst raging seas swell to so bold an
height,

As shall the fire's proud element af-
fright.

Th'

Th' old drudging Sun, from his long-beaten way,

Shall at thy voice start, and misguide the day.

The jocund orbs shall break their measured pace,

And stubborn Poles change their allotted place.

Heaven's gilded troops shall flutter here and there,

Leaving their boasting songs tun'd to a sphere.

Every reader feels himself weary with this useless talk of an allegorical Being.

It is not only when the events are confessedly miraculous, that fancy and fiction lose their effect : the whole system
of

of life, while the Theocracy was yet visible, has an appearance so different from all other scenes of human action, that the reader of the Sacred Volume habitually considers it as a peculiar mode of existence of a distinct species of mankind, that lived and acted with manners uncommunicable; so that it is difficult even for imagination to place us in the state of them whose story is related, and by consequence their joys and griefs are not easily adopted; nor can the attention be often interested in any thing that befalls them.

To the subject, thus originally indisposed to the reception of poetical embellishments, the writer brought little that could reconcile impatience, or at-

tract curiosity. Nothing can be more disgusting than a narrative spangled with conceits, and conceits are all that the Davideis supplies.

One of the great sources of poetical delight is description, or the power of presenting pictures to the mind. Cowley gives inferences instead of images, and shews not what may be supposed to have been seen, but what thoughts the sight might have suggested. When Virgil describes the stone which Turnus lifted against Æneas, he fixes the attention on its bulk and weight:

Saxum circumspicit ingens,
Saxum antiquum, ingens, campo qui
forte jacebat,

Limes

Limes egro positus, litem ut discerneret
arvis.

Cowley says of the stone with which
Cain slew his brother,

I saw him fling the stone, as if he meant
At once his murder and his monument.

Of the sword taken from Goliath, he
says,

A sword so great, that it was only fit
To cut off his great head that came
with it.

Other poets describe death by some
of its common appearances; Cowley
says, with a learned allusion to sepulchral
lamps real or fabulous,

'Twixt his right ribs deep pierc'd the
furious blade,

And open'd wide those secret vessels
where

Life's light goes out, when first they let
in air.

But he has allusions vulgar as well as
learned. In a visionary succession of
kings :

Joas at first does bright and glorious
show,

In life's fresh morn his fame does early
crow.

Describing an undisciplined army, after
having said with elegance,

His forces seem'd no army, but a crowd
Heartless, unarm'd, disorderly, and
loud ;

he gives them a fit of the ague.

The allusions however are not always to vulgar things :

The king was plac'd alone, and o'er his head

A well-wrought heav'n of filk and gold
was spread.

Whatever he writes is always polluted
with some conceit :

Where the sun's fruitful beams give
metals birth,

Where he the growth of fatal gold does
see,

Gold, which alone more influence has
than he.

In one passage he starts a sudden
question, to the confusion of philoso-
phy :

Ye learned heads, whom ivy garlands
grace,

Why does that twining plant the oak
embrace?

The oak, for courtship most of all unfit,
And rough as are the winds that fight
with it.

His expressions have sometimes a degree of meanness that surpasses expectation :

Nay, gentle guests, he cries, since now
you're in,

The story of your gallant friend begin.

In a simile descriptive of the morning :

As glimm'ring stars just at th' approach
of day,

Cashier'd by troops, at last drop all away.

The dress of Gabriel deserves attention :

He took for skin a cloud most soft and
bright,

That e'er the midday sun pierc'd thro'
with light,

Upon his cheeks a lively blush he spread,
Wash'd from the morning beauties deep-
est red,

An harmless flatt'ring meteor shone for
hair,

And fell adown his shoulders with loose
care ;

He cuts out a silk mantle from the skies,
Where the most spritely azure pleas'd
the eyes ;

This he with starry vapours sprinkles all,
Took in their prime ere they grow ripe
and fall ;

Of a new rainbow, ere it fret or fade,
The choicest piece cut out, a scarfe, is
made.

This is a just specimen of Cowley's imagery : what might in general expressions be great and forcible, he weakens and makes ridiculous by branching it into small parts. That Gabriel was invested with the softest or brightest colours of the sky, we might have been told, and dismissed to improve the idea in our different proportions of conception ; but Cowley could not let us go till he had related where Gabriel got first his skin, and then his mantle, then his lace, and then his scarfe, and related it in the terms of the mercer and the taylor.

Some-

Sometimes he indulges himself in a digression, always conceived with his natural exuberance, and commonly, even where it is not long, continued till it is tedious :

I' th' library a few choice authors stood,
Yet 'twas well stor'd ; for that small
store was good ;

Writing, man's spiritual phyfic, was
not then

Itself, as now, grown a disease of men :

Learning (young virgin) but few suitors
knew ;

The common prostitute she lately grew,

And with the spurious brood loads now
the press ;

Laborious effects of idleness !

As

As the *Davidis* affords only four books, though intended to consist of twelve, there is no opportunity for such criticism as *Epick* poems commonly supply. The plan of the whole work is very imperfectly shewn by the third part. The duration of an unfinished action cannot be known. Of characters either not yet introduced, or shewn but upon few occasions, the full extent and the nice discriminations cannot be ascertained. The fable is plainly implex, formed rather from the *Odyssey* than the *Iliad*; and many artifices of diversification are employed, with the skill of a man acquainted with the best models. The past is recalled by narration, and the future anticipated by vision : but he

has

has been so lavish of his poetical art, that it is difficult to imagine how he could fill eight books more without practising again the same modes of disposing his matter; and perhaps the perception of this growing incumbrance inclined him to stop. By this abruptness, posterity lost more instruction than delight. If the continuation of the Davideis can be missed, it is for the learning that had been diffused over it, and the notes in which it had been explained.

Had not his characters been depraved like every other part by improper decorations, they would have deserved uncommon praise. He gives Saul both the body and mind of a hero:

His

His way once chose, he forward thrust
outright,

Nor turn'd aside for danger or delight.

And the different beauties of the lofty
Merah and the gentle Michol are very
justly conceived and strongly painted.

Rymer has declared the *Davideis* superior to the *Jerusalem of Tasso*, "which, says he, the poet, with all his care, has not totally purged from pedantry." If by pedantry is meant that minute knowledge which is derived from particular sciences and studies, in opposition to the general notions supplied by a wide survey of life and nature, Cowley certainly errs, by introducing pedantry far more frequently than Tasso. I know not, indeed, why they should be compared,

pared, for the resemblance of Cowley's work to Tasso's, is only that they both exhibit the agency of celestial and infernal spirits, in which however they differ widely ; for Cowley supposes them commonly to operate upon the mind by suggestion ; Tasso represents them as promoting or obstructing events by external agency.

Of particular passages that can be properly compared, I remember only the description of Heaven, in which the different manner of the two writers is sufficiently discernible. Cowley's is scarcely description, unless it be possible to describe by negatives ; for he tells us only what there is not in heaven ; Tasso endeavours to represent the splendours

and pleasures of the regions of happiness. Tasso affords images, and Cowley sentiments. It happens, however, that Tasso's description affords some reason for Rhymers's censure. He says of the Supreme Being,

Hà sotto i piedi e fatto e la natura
Ministri humili, e'l moto, e chi'l misura.

The second line has in it more of pedantry than perhaps can be found in any other stanza of the poem.

In the perusal of the *Davidis*, as of all Cowley's works, we find wit and learning unprofitably squandered. Attention has no relief; the affections are never moved; we are sometimes surprised, but never delighted, and find much to

admire,

admire, but little to approve. Still however it is the work of Cowley, of a mind capacious by nature, and replenished by study.

In the general review of Cowley's poetry it will be found, that he wrote with abundant fertility, but negligent or unskilful selection; with much thought, but with little imagery; that he is never pathetick, and rarely sublime, but always either ingenious or learned, either acute or profound.

It is said by Denham in his elegy,

To him no author was unknown;

Yet what he writ was all his own.

This wide position requires less limitation, when it is affirmed of Cowley than perhaps of any other poet——

He read much, and yet borrowed little.

His character of writing was indeed not his own: he unhappily adopted that which was predominant. He saw a certain way to present praise, and not sufficiently enquiring by what means the ancients have continued to delight through all the changes of human manners, he contented himself with a deciduous laurel, of which the verdure in its spring was bright and gay, but which time has been continually stealing from his brows.

He was in his own time considered as of unrivalled excellence. Clarendon represents him as having taken a flight beyond all that went before him; and

Mil-

Milton is said to have declared, that the three greatest English poets were Spenser, Shakespeare, and Cowley.

His manner he had in common with others ; but his sentiments were his own. Upon every subject he thought for himself ; and such was his copiousness of knowledge, that something at once remote and applicable rushed into his mind ; yet it is not likely that he always rejected a commodious idea merely because another had used it : his known wealth was so great, that he might have borrowed without loss of credit.

In his elegy on Sir Henry Wotton, the last lines have such resemblance to the noble epigram of Grotius upon the

L

death

death of Scaliger, that I cannot but think them copied from it, though they are copied by no servile hand.

One passage in his *Mistress* is so apparently borrowed from Donne, that he probably would not have written it, had it not mingled with his own thoughts, so as that he did not perceive himself taking it from another.

Althó' I think thou never found wilt be,
 Yet I'm resolv'd to search for thee;
 The search itself rewards the pains.
 So, tho' the chymic his great secret miss,
 (For neither it in Art nor Nature is)
 Yet things well worth his toil he gains:
 And does his charge and labour pay
 With good unfought experiments by the
 way. COWLEY.

Some that have deeper digg'd Love's
mine than I,

Say, where his centric happiness doth
lie :

I have lov'd, and got, and told ;
But should I love, get, tell, till I were
old,

I should not find that hidden mystery ;

Oh, 'tis imposture all :

And as no chymic yet th' elixir got,

But glorifies his pregnant pot,

If by the way to him befall

Some odoriferous thing, or medicinal,

So, lovers dream a rich and long delight,

But get a winter-seeming summer's
night,

Done.

It is related by Clarendon, that Cowley always acknowledged his obligation to the learning and industry of Jonson, but I have found no traces of Jonson in his works; to emulate Donne appears to have been his purpose; and from Donne he may have learned that familiarity with religious images, and that light allusion to sacred things, by which readers far short of sanctity are frequently offended; and which would not be borne in the present age, when devotion, perhaps not more fervent, is more delicate.

Having produced one passage taken by Cowley from Donne, I will recompense him by another which Milton seems

seems to have borrowed from him. He
says of Goliath,

His spear, the trunk was of a lofty tree,
Which Nature meant some tall ship's
mast should be.

Milton of Satan,

His spear, to equal which the tallest pine
Hewn on Norwegian hills, to be the mast
Of some great admiral, were but a wand,
He walk'd with. —

His diction was in his own time cen-
sured as negligent. He seems not to
have known, or not to have considered,
that words being arbitrary must owe
their power to association, and have the
influence, and that only, which custom
has given them. Language is the dress

of thought; and as the noblest mien, or most graceful action, would be degraded and obscured by a garb appropriated to the gross employments of rusticks or mechanicks, so the most heroic sentiments will lose their efficacy, and the most splendid ideas drop their magnificence, if they are conveyed by words used commonly upon low and trivial occasions, debased by vulgar mouths, and contaminated by inelegant applications.

Truth indeed is always truth, and reason is always reason; they have an intrinsic and unalterable value, and constitute that intellectual gold which defies destruction: but gold may be so

concealed in baser matter that only a chymist can recover it, sense may be so hidden in unrefined and plebeian words that none but philosophers can distinguish it; and both may be so buried in impurities, as not to pay the cost of their extraction.

The diction being the vehicle of the thoughts, first presents itself to the intellectual eye; and if the first appearance offends, a further knowledge is not often sought. Whatever professes to benefit by pleasing, must please at once. The pleasures of reason imply something sudden and unexpected; that which elevates must always surprise. What is perceived by slow degrees may gratify us with the consciousness

of improvement, but will never strike with the sense of pleasure.

Of all this, Cowley seems to have been without knowledge, or without care. He makes no selection of words, nor seeks any neatness of phrase: he has no elegancies either lucky or elaborate; as his endeavours were rather to impress sentences upon the understanding than images on the fancy, he has few epithets, and those scattered without peculiar propriety or nice adaptation. It seems to follow from the necessity of the subject, rather than the care of the writer, that the diction of his heroick poem is less familiar than that of his slightest writings. He has given not the same numbers, but the same diction to
the

the gentle Anacreon and the tempestuous Pindar.

His versification seems to have had very little of his care; and if what he thinks be true, that his numbers are unmusical only when they are ill read, the art of reading them is at present lost; for they are commonly harsh to modern ears. He has indeed many noble lines, such as the feeble care of Waller never could produce. The bulk of his thoughts sometimes swelled his verse to unexpected and inevitable grandeur; but his excellence of this kind is merely fortuitous: he sinks willingly down to his general carelessness, and avoids with very little care either meanness or asperity.

His contractions are often rugged and harsh :

One flings a mountain, and its rivers too
Torn up with't.—

His rhymes are very often made by pronouns or particles, or the like unimportant words, which disappoint the ear, and destroy the energy of the line.

His combination of different measures is sometimes dissonant and unpleasing ; he joins verses together, of which the former does not slide easily into the latter.

The words *do* and *did*, which so much degrade in present estimation the line that admits them, were in the time of Cowley little censured or avoided : how often he used them, and with how
bad

bad an effect, at least to our ears, will appear by a passage, in which every reader will lament to see just and noble thoughts defrauded of their praise by inelegance of language :

Where honour or where conscience *does*
not bind,

No other law shall shackle me.

Slave to myself I ne'er will be ;

Nor shall my future actions be confin'd :

By my own present mind.

Who, by resolves and vows engag'd *does*
stand

For days, that yet belong to fate, ,

Does like an unthrift mortgage his estate, ,

Before it falls into his hand,

The bondman of the cloister so,

All that he *does* receive *does* always owe..

And

And still as Time come in, it goes away,

Not to enjoy, but debts to pay.

Unhappy slave, and pupil to a bell !

Which his hours' work as well as hours
does tell :

Unhappy till the last, the kind releasing
 knell.

His heroick lines are often formed of
 monosyllables ; but yet they are some-
 times sweet and sonorous.

He says of the Messiah,

Round the whole earth his dreaded name
 shall found,

*And reach to worlds that must not yet be
 found.*

In another place, of David,

Yet

Yet bid him go securely, when he fends;
'Tis Saul that is his foe, and we his friends.
The man who has his God, no aid can lack,
And we who bid him go, will bring him
back.

He did not write without attempting
 an improved and scientifick ver-
 tification; of which it will be best to give
 his own account subjoined to this
 line,

Nor can the glory contain itself in
 th' endless space.

“ I am sorry that it is necessary to ad-
 “ monish the most part of readers, that
 “ it is not by negligence that this verse is
 “ so loose, long, and, as it were, vast; it
 “ is to paint in the number the nature
 “ of

“ of the thing which it describes, which
 “ I would have observed in divers other
 “ places of this poem, that else will pass
 “ for very careless verses : as before,
*And over-runs the neighb’ring fields with
 violent course.*

“ In the second book ;
*Down a precipice deep, down he casts them
 all.—*

“ —And,
*And fell a-down his shoulders with loose
 care.*

“ In the third,
*Brass was his helmet, his boots brass, and
 o’er
 His breast a thick plate of brass he wore.*

“ In

“ In the fourth,

*Like some fair pine o'er-looking all the igno-
bler wood.*

“ And,

*Some from the rocks cast themselves down
headlong.*

“ And many more : but it is enough to
“ instance in a few. The thing is, that
“ the disposition of words and numbers
“ should be such, as that, out of the or-
“ der and sound of them, the things
“ themselves may be represented. This
“ the Greeks were not so accurate as to
“ bind themselves to ; neither have our
“ English poets observed it, for aught I
“ can find. The Latins (*qui musas volunt
“ severiores*) sometimes did it, and their
“ prince, Virgil, always : in whom the

“ exam

“ examples are innumerable, and taken
 “ notice of by all judicious men, so that
 “ it is superfluous to collect them.”

I know not whether he has, in many of these instances, attained the representation or resemblance that he purposes. Verse can imitate only sound and motion. A *boundless* verse, a *headlong* verse, and a verse of *brass* or of *strong brass*, seem to comprise very incongruous and unsociable ideas. What there is peculiar in the sound of the line expressing *loose care*, I cannot discover; nor why the *pine* is *taller* in an Alexandrine than in ten syllables.

But, not to defraud him of his due praise, he has given one example of re-
 pre-

presentative versification, which perhaps
no other English line can equal :

Begin, be bold, and venture to be wise.

He who defers this work from day to
day,

Does on a river's bank expecting stay

Till the whole stream that stopp'd him
shall be gone,

*Which runs, and as it runs, for ever shall
run on.*

Cowley was, I believe, the first poet
that mingled Alexandrines at pleasure
with the common heroick of ten syllables,
and from him Dryden borrowed the
practice, whether ornamental or licen-
tious. He considered the verse of
twelve syllables as elevated and majes-
tick, and has therefore deviated into that

measure when he supposes the voice heard of the Supreme Being.

The Author of the *Davideis* is commended by Dryden for having written it in couplets, because he discovered that any staff was too lyrical for an heroick poem; but this seems to have been known before by *May* and *Sandys*, the translators of the *Pharfalia* and the *Metamorphoses*.

In the *Davideis* are some hemistichs, or verses left imperfect by the author, in imitation of Virgil, whom he supposes not to have intended to complete them: that this opinion is erroneous may be probably concluded, because this truncation is imitated by no subsequent Roman poet; because Virgil himself filled up

one broken line in the heat of recitation ; because in one the sense is now unfinished ; and because all that can be done by a broken verse, a line intersected by a *cesura* and a full stop will equally effect.

Of triplets in his Davideis he makes no use, and perhaps did not at first think them allowable ; but he appears afterwards to have changed his mind, for in the verses on the government of Cromwel he inserts them liberally with great happiness.

After so much criticism on his Poems, the Essays which accompany them must not be forgotten. What is said by Sprat of his conversation, that no man could draw from it any suspicion of his excellence in poetry, may be ar

to these compositions. No author ever kept his verse and his prose at a greater distance from each other. His thoughts are natural, and his stile has a smooth and placid equability, which has never yet obtained its due commendation. Nothing is far-sought, or hard-laboured; but all is easy without feebleness, and familiar without grossness.

It has been observed by Felton, in his Essay on the Classics, that Cowley was beloved by every Muse that he courted; and that he has rivalled the Ancients in every kind of poetry but tragedy.

It may be affirmed, without any encomiastick fervour, that he brought to his poetick labours a mind replete with learning, and that his pages are embel-

lished

lished with all the ornaments which books could supply ; that he was the first who imparted to English numbers the enthusiasm of the greater ode, and the gaiety of the less ; that he was equally qualified for spritely sallies, and for lofty flights ; that he was among those who freed translation from servility, and instead of following his author at a distance, walked by his side ; and that if he left versification yet improvable, he left likewise from time to time such specimens of excellence as enabled succeeding poets to improve it.



W A L L E R.

EDMUND WALLER was born on the third of March, 1605, at Colshill in Hertfordshire. His father was Robert Waller, Esquire, of Agmondesham in Buckinghamshire, whose family was originally a branch of the Kentish Wallers; and his mother was the daughter of John Hampden, of Hampden in the same county, and sister to Hampden, the zealot of rebellion,

b

His

His father died while he was yet an infant, but left him an yearly income of three thousand five hundred pounds; which, rating together the value of money and the customs of life, we may reckon more than equivalent to ten thousand at the present time.

He was educated, by the care of his mother, at Eaton; and removed afterwards to King's College in Cambridge. He was sent to parliament in his eighteenth, if not in his sixteenth year, and frequented the court of James the First, where he heard a very remarkable conversation, which the writer of the Life prefixed to his Works, who seems to have been well informed of facts, though he may sometimes err in

chronology

chronology, has delivered as indubitably certain.

“ He found Dr. Andrews, bishop of
 “ Winchester, and Dr. Neale, bishop of
 “ Durham, standing behind his Ma-
 “ jesty’s chair; and there happened
 “ something extraordinary,” continues
 this writer, “ in the conversation those
 “ prelates had with the king, on which
 “ Mr. Waller did often reflect. His
 “ majesty asked the bishops, “ My lords,
 “ cannot I take my subjects money,
 “ when I want it, without all this for-
 “ mality of parliament ?” The bishop
 “ of Durham readily answered, “ God
 “ forbid, Sir, but you should : you are
 “ the breath of our nostrils.” Where-
 “ upon the king turned and said to

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“ the bishop of Winchester, “ Well,
 “ my lord, what say you ?” “ Sir, re-
 “ plied the bishop, I have no skill to
 “ judge of parliamentary cases.” The
 “ king answered, “ No put-offs, my
 “ lord ; answer me presently.” “ Then,
 “ Sir, said he, I think it is lawful for
 “ you to take my brother Neale’s mo-
 “ ney ; for he offers it.” Mr. Waller
 “ said the company was pleased with
 “ this answer, and the wit of it seemed
 “ to affect the king ; for, a certain lord
 “ coming in soon after, his majesty
 “ cried out, “ Oh, my lord, they say
 “ you lig with my lady.” “ No, Sir,
 “ says his lordship in confusion, but I
 “ like her company, because she has so
 “ much wit.” “ Why then, says the
 “ king,

“king, do you not lig with my lord
 “of Winchester there?”

Waller's political and poetical life began nearly together. In his eighteenth year he wrote the poem that appears first in his works, on “the Prince's Escape
 “at St. Andero;” a piece which justifies the observation made by one of his editors, that he attained, by a felicity like instinct, a stile which perhaps will never be obsolete; and that, “were we
 “to judge only by the wording, we
 “could not know what was wrote at
 “twenty, and what at fourscore.” His versification was in his first essay, such as it appears in his last performance. By the perusal of Fairfax's translation of Tasso, to which, as Dryden relates, he

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confessed himself indebted for the smoothness of his numbers, and, by his own nicety of observation, he had already formed such a system of metrical harmony as he never afterwards much needed, or much endeavoured to improve. Denham corrected his numbers by experience, and gained ground gradually upon the ruggedness of his age; but what was acquired by Denham, was inherited by Waller.

The next poem, of which the subject seems to fix the time, is supposed by Mr. Fenton to be the Address to the Queen, which he considers as congratulating her arrival, in Waller's twentieth year. He is apparently mistaken; for the mention of the nation's obliga-

tions to her frequent pregnancy, proves that it was written when she had brought many children. We have therefore no date of any other poetical production before that which the murder of the duke of Buckingham occasioned : the steadiness with which the king received the news in the chapel, deserved indeed to be rescued from oblivion.

Neither of these pieces seem to have been the sudden effusion of fancy. In one the prediction of the marriage with the princess of France, which must have been written after the event ; in the other, the promises of the king's kindness to the descendants of Buckingham, which could not be known till it had appeared by its effects ; shew that

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time was taken for revision and improvement. It is not indeed known that they were published till they appeared long afterwards with other poems.

Waller was not one of those idolaters of praise who cultivate their minds at the expence of their fortunes. Rich as he was by inheritance, he took care early to grow richer by marrying Mrs. Banks, a great heiress in the city, whom the interest of the court was employed to obtain for Mr. Crofts. Having brought him a son, who died young, and a daughter, who was afterwards married to Mr. Dormer of Oxfordshire, she died in childbed, and left him a widower of about five and twenty, gay
and

and wealthy, to please himself with another marriage.

Being too young to resist beauty, and probably too vain to think himself resistible, he fixed his heart, perhaps half fondly and half ambitiously, upon the lady Dorothea Sidney, eldest daughter of the earl of Leicester, whom he courted by all the poetry in which *Sacharissa* is celebrated; the name is derived from the Latin appellation of *sugar*, and implies, if it means any thing, a spiritless mildness, and dull good-nature, such as excites rather tenderness than esteem, and such as, though always treated with kindness, is never honoured or admired.

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Yet he describes Sachariffa as a sublime predominating beauty, of lofty charms, and imperious influence, on whom he looks with amazement rather than fondness, whose chains he wishes, though in vain, to break, and whose presence is *wine* that *inflames to madness*.

His acquaintance with this high-born dame gave wit no opportunity of boasting its influence; she was not to be subdued by the powers of verse, but rejected his addresses, it is said, with disdain, and drove him away to solace his disappointment with Amoret or Phillis. She married in 1639 the earl of Sunderland, who died at Newberry in the king's cause; and, in her old age, meeting somewhere with Waller, asked him,

when he would again write such verses upon her; “When you are as young, “Madam, said he, and as handsome, as “you were then.”

In this part of his life it was that he was known to Clarendon, among the rest of the men who were eminent in that age for genius and literature; but known so little to his advantage, that they who read his character will not much condemn Sacharissa, that she did not descend from her rank to his embraces, nor think every excellence comprised in wit.

The lady was, indeed, inexorable; but his uncommon qualifications, though they had no power upon her, recommended him to the most illustrious

scholars and statesmen; and undoubtedly many beauties of that time, however they might receive his love, were proud of his praises. Who they were, whom he dignifies with poetical names, cannot now be known. Amoret, according to Mr. Fenton, was the lady Sophia Murray. Perhaps by traditions preserved in families more may be discovered.

From the verses written at Penshurst, it has been collected that he diverted his disappointment by a voyage; and his biographers, from his poem on the Whales, think it not improbable that he visited the Bermudas; but it seems much more likely that he should amuse himself with forming an imaginary scene, than that so important an incident,

dent, as a visit to America, should have been left floating in conjectural probability.

From his twenty-eighth to his thirty-fifth year, he wrote his pieces on the Reduction of Salée; on the Reparation of St. Paul's; to the King on his Navy; the panegyrick on the Queen Mother; the two poems to the earl of Northumberland; and perhaps others, of which the time cannot be discovered.

When he had lost all hopes of Sachariffa, he looked round him for an easier conquest, and gained a lady of the family of Bresse, or Breaux. The time of his marriage is not exactly known. It has not been discovered that this wife was won by his poetry; nor is any thing

thing told of her, but that she brought him many children. He doubtless praised many whom he would have been afraid to marry; and perhaps married one whom he would have been ashamed to praise. Many qualities contribute to domestick happiness, upon which poetry has no colours to bestow; and many airs and fallies may delight imagination, which he who flatters them never can approve. There are charms made only for distant admiration. No spectacle is nobler than a blaze.

Of this wife, his biographers have recorded that she gave him five sons and eight daughters.

During the long interval of parliament, he is represented as living among
those

those with whom it was most honourable to converse, and enjoying an exuberant fortune, with that independence and liberty of speech and conduct, which wealth ought always to produce. He was however considered as the kinsman of Hampden, and was therefore supposed by the courtiers not to favour them.

When the parliament was called, in 1640, it appeared that Waller's political character had not been mistaken. The king's demand of a supply, produced one of those noisy speeches which disaffection and discontent regularly dictate; a speech filled with hyperbolical complaints of imaginary grievances. "They, says he, who think themselves
" already

“ already undone can never apprehend
 “ themselves in danger, and they who
 “ have nothing left can never give
 “ freely.” Political truth is equally in
 danger from the praises of courtiers,
 and the exclamations of patriots.

He then proceeds to rail at the clergy, being sure at that time of a favourable audience. His topick is such as will always serve its purpose; an accusation of acting and preaching only for preferment: and he exhorts the Commons *carefully to provide* for their *protection against Pulpit law.*

It always gratifies curiosity to trace a sentiment. Waller has in this speech quoted Hooker in one passage; and in another has copied him, without
 quoting.

quoting. “ Religion,” *says* Waller,
 “ ought to be the first thing in our pur-
 “ pose and desires ; but that which is
 “ first in dignity is not always to pre-
 “ cede in order of time ; for well-
 “ being supposes a being ; and the first
 “ impediment which men naturally en-
 “ deavour to remove, is the want of
 “ those things without which they can-
 “ not subsist. God first assigned unto
 “ Adam maintenance of life, and gave
 “ him a title to the rest of the creatures
 “ before he appointed a law to observe.”

“ God first assigned Adam,” *says*
 Hooker, “ maintenance of life, and then
 “ appointed him a law to observe.--True
 “ it is, that the kingdom of God must
 “ be the first thing in our purpose and
 “ desires ;

“ desires ; but inasmuch as a righteous
 “ life presupposeth life, inasmuch as to
 “ live virtuously it is impossible, ex-
 “ cept we live ; therefore the first im-
 “ pediment which naturally we endea-
 “ vour to remove is penury, and want
 “ of things without which we cannot
 “ live.” B. I. sect. 9.

The speech is vehement ; but the
 great position, that grievances ought
 to be redressed before supplies are
 granted, is agreeable enough to law
 and reason : nor was Waller, if his bio-
 grapher may be credited, such an ene-
 my to the king as not to wish his dis-
 tresses lightened ; for he relates, “ that
 “ the king sent particularly to Waller,
 “ to second his demand of some subfi-
 “ dies

“ dies to pay off the army; and Sir
 “ Henry Vane objecting against first
 “ voting a supply, because the king
 “ would not accept unless it came up
 “ to his proportion, Mr. Waller spoke
 “ earnestly to Sir Thomas Jermyn, comp-
 “ troller of the household, to save his
 “ master from the effects of so bold a
 “ falsity; “ for, he said, I am but a coun-
 “ try gentleman, and cannot pretend to
 “ know the king’s mind :” but Sir Tho-
 “ mas durst not contradict the secre-
 “ tary; and his son, the earl of St. Al-
 “ bans, afterwards told Mr. Waller, that
 “ his father’s cowardice ruined the
 “ king.”

In the Long Parliament, which, un-
 happily for the nation, met Nov. 3,

1640, Waller represented Agmondesham the third time; and was considered by the discontented party as a man sufficiently trusty and acrimonious to be employed in managing the prosecution of judge Crawley, for his opinion in favour of ship-money; and his speech shews that he did not disappoint their expectations. He was probably the more ardent, as his uncle Hampden had been particularly engaged in the dispute, and by a sentence which seems generally to be thought unconstitutional particularly injured.

He was not however a bigot to his party, nor adopted all their opinions. When the great question, whether Episcopacy ought to be abolished, was de-

bated, he spoke against the innovation so coolly, so reasonably, and so firmly, that it is not without great injury to his name that his speech, which was as follows, has been hitherto omitted in his works :

* “ There is no doubt but the sense
 “ of what this nation hath suffered from
 “ the present bishops, hath produced
 “ these complaints ; and the apprehen-
 “ sions men have of suffering the like,
 “ in time to come, make so many desire
 “ the taking away of episcopacy : but
 “ I conceive it is possible that we may
 “ not, now, take a right measure of the

* This speech has been retrieved, from a paper printed at that time, by the writers of the Parliamentary History.

“ minds of the people by their peti-
“ tions; for, when they subscribed them,
“ the bishops were armed with a dan-
“ gerous commission of making new
“ canons, imposing new oaths, and the-
“ like; but now we have disarmed them
“ of that power. These petitioners,
“ lately, did look upon episcopacy as a
“ beast armed with horns and claws;
“ but now that we have cut and pared
“ them, (and may, if we see cause, yet
“ reduce it into narrower bounds) it may,
“ perhaps, be more agreeable. How-
“ soever, if they be still in passion, it be-
“ comes us soberly to consider the right
“ use and antiquity thereof; and not to
“ comply further with a general desire,
“ than may stand with a general good.

“ We have already shewed, that
 “ episcopacy, and the evils thereof, are
 “ mingled like water and oil; we
 “ have also, in part, severed them;
 “ but I believe you will find, that
 “ our laws and the present government
 “ of the church are mingled like wine
 “ and water; so inseparable, that the
 “ abrogation of, at least, a hundred of
 “ our laws is desired in these petitions.
 “ I have often heard a noble answer of
 “ the Lords, commended in this house,
 “ to a proposition of like nature, but
 “ of less consequence; they gave no
 “ other reason of their refusal but this,
 “ *Nolumus mutare Leges Angliæ*: it was
 “ the bishops who so answered then;
 “ and it would become the dignity and

“ wisdom of this house to answer the
 “ people, now, with a *Nolumus mutare.*

“ I see some are moved with a num-
 “ ber of hands against the bishops;
 “ which, I confess, rather inclines me
 “ to their defence: for I look upon
 “ episcopacy as a counterscarp, or out-
 “ work; which, if it be taken by this
 “ assault of the people, and, withall,
 “ this mystery once revealed, *That we*
 “ *must deny them nothing when they ask*
 “ *it thus in troops,* we may, in the next
 “ place, have as hard a task to defend
 “ our property, as we have lately had
 “ to recover it from the Prerogative.
 “ If, by multiplying hands and peti-
 “ tions, they prevail for an equality in
 “ things ecclesiastical, the next demand

“ per-

“ perhaps may be *Lex Agraria*, the like
 “ equality in things temporal.

“ The Roman story tells us, That
 “ when the people began to flock about
 “ the senate, and were more curious to
 “ direct and know what was done, than
 “ to obey, that Commonwealth soon
 “ came to ruin : their *Legem rogare* grew
 “ quickly to be a *Legem ferre* ; and af-
 “ ter, when their legions had found that
 “ they could make a Dictator, they ne-
 “ ver suffered the senate to have a voice
 “ any more in such election.

“ If these great innovations proceed,
 “ I shall expect a flat and level in learn-
 “ ing too, as well as in church-prefer-
 “ ments : *Honos alit Artes*. And though
 “ it be true, that grave and pious men
 “ do

“ do study for learning-fake, and em-
 “ brace virtue for itself; yet it is as
 “ true, that youth, which is the season
 “ when learning is gotten, is not with-
 “ out ambition; nor will ever take pains
 “ to excell in any thing, when there is
 “ not some hope of excelling others in
 “ reward and dignity.

“ There are two reasons chiefly al-
 “ leged against our church-govern-
 “ ment.

“ First, Scripture, which, as some
 “ men think, points out another form.

“ Second, The abuses of the present
 “ superiors.

“ For Scripture, I will not dispute it
 “ in this place; but I am confident
 “ that, whenever an equal division of

“ lands and goods shall be desired, there:
 “ will be as many places in Scripture
 “ found out, which seem to favour that,
 “ as there are now alleged against the
 “ prelacy or preferment in the church.
 “ And, as for abuses, where you are
 “ now, in the Remonstrance, told, what
 “ this and that poor man hath suffered
 “ by the bishops, you may be pre-
 “ sented with a thousand instances of
 “ poor men that have received hard
 “ measure from their landlords; and
 “ of worldly goods abused, to the in-
 “ jury of others, and disadvantage of
 “ the owners.

“ And therefore, Mr. Speaker, my
 “ humble motion is, That we may set-
 “ the men's minds herein; and, by a

“ question, declare our resolution, *to*
 “ *reform*, that is, *not to abolish*, *Epis-*
 “ *copacy.*”

It cannot but be wished that he, who could speak in this manner, had been able to act with spirit and uniformity.

When the Commons began to set the royal authority at open defiance, Waller is said to have withdrawn from the house, and to have returned with the king's permission; and, when the king set up his standard, he sent him a thousand broad-pieces. He continued, however, to sit in the rebellious conventicle; but “ spoke,” says Clarendon, “ with great “ sharpness and freedom, which, now “ there was no danger of being out- “ voted, was not restrained; and there- “ fore

“ fore used as an argument against those
 “ who were gone upon pretence that
 “ they were not suffered to deliver their
 “ opinion freely in the house, which
 “ could not be believed, when all men
 “ knew what liberty Mr. Waller took,
 “ and spoke every day with impunity
 “ against the sense and proceedings of
 “ the house.”

Waller, as he continued to sit, was
 one of the commissioners nominated by
 the parliament to treat with the king
 at Oxford; and when they were pre-
 sented, the king said to him, “ Though
 “ you are the last, you are not the low-
 “ est nor the least in my favour.” Whit-
 lock, who, being another of the com-
 missioners, was witness of this kindness,
 imputes

imputes it to the king's knowledge of the plot, in which Waller appeared afterwards to have been engaged against the parliament. Fenton, with equal probability, believes that his attempt to promote the royal cause arose from his sensibility of the king's tenderness. Whitlock says nothing of his behaviour at Oxford: he was sent with several others to add pomp to the commission; but was not one of those to whom the trust of treating was imparted.

The engagement, known by the name of Waller's plot, was soon afterwards discovered. Waller had a brother-in-law, Tomkyns, who was clerk of the Queen's council, and at the same time had a very numerous acquaintance, and great

great influence, in the city. Waller and he, conversing with great confidence, told both their own secrets and those of their friends; and, surveying the wide extent of their conversation, imagined that they found in the majority of all ranks great disapprobation of the violence of the Commons, and unwillingness to continue the war. They knew that many favoured the king, whose fear concealed their loyalty; and many desired peace, though they durst not oppose the clamour for war; and they imagined that if those who had these good intentions could be informed of their own strength, and enabled by intelligence to act together, they might overpower the fury of sedition, by refusing

fusing to comply with the ordinance for the twentieth part, and the other taxes levied for the support of the rebel army, and by uniting great numbers in a petition for peace.

Lord Conway joined in the design and, as Clarendon imagines, incidentally mingled, as he was a soldier, some martial hopes or projects, which however were only mentioned, the main design being to bring the loyal inhabitants to the knowledge of each other for which purpose there was to be appointed one in every district, to distinguish the friends of the king, the adherents to the parliament, and the neutrals. How far they proceeded does not appear; the result of their enquiry,

as Pym declared, was, that within the walls for one that was for them, there were three against them ; but that without the walls for one that was against them, there were three for them. Whether this was said from knowledge or guess, was perhaps never enquired.

It is the opinion of Clarendon, that in Waller's plan no violence or sanguinary resistance was comprised ; that he intended only to abate the confidence of the rebels by publick declarations, and to weaken their power by an opposition to new supplies. This, in calmer times, and more than this, is done without fear ; but such was the acrimony of the commons, that no method of obstructing them was safe.

About this time another design was formed by Sir Nicholas Crispe, a man of loyalty that deserves perpetual remembrance; when he was a merchant in the city, he gave and procured the king, in his exigencies, an hundred thousand pounds; and, when he was driven from the Exchange, raised a regiment, and commanded it.

Sir Nicholas flattered himself with an opinion, that some provocation would so much exasperate, or some opportunity so much encourage, the king's friends in the city, that they would break out in open resistance, and then would want only a lawful standard, and an authorised commander; and extorted from the king, whose judgment

yielded to importunity, a commission of array, directed to such as he thought proper to nominate, which was sent to London by the lady Aubigny. She knew not what she carried, but was to deliver it on the communication of a certain token which Sir Nicholas imparted.

This commission could be only intended to lie ready till the time should require it. To have attempted to raise any forces, would have been certain destruction: it could be of use only when the forces should appear. This was, however, an act preparatory to martial hostility. Crispe would undoubtedly have put an end to the session of parliament, had his strength been equal to his zeal; and out of the design of Crispe,

which involved very little danger, and that of Waller, which was an act purely civil, they compounded a horrid and dreadful plot.

The discovery of Waller's design is variously related. In Clarendon's History it is told, that a servant of Tomkyns, lurking behind the hangings when his master was in conference with Waller, heard enough to qualify him for an informer, and carried his intelligence to Pym. A manuscript, quoted in the Life of Waller, relates, that " he was " betrayed by his sister Price, and her " presbyterian chaplain Mr. Goode, " who stole some of his papers; and " if he had not strangely dreamed the " night before, that his sister had " betrayed



“ betrayed him, and thereupon burnt
 “ the rest of his papers by the fire that
 “ was left in his chimney, he had cer-
 “ tainly lost his life by it.” The ques-
 tion cannot be decided. It is not un-
 reasonable to believe that the men in
 power, receiving intelligence from the
 sister, would employ the servant of
 Tomkyns to listen at the conference,
 that they might avoid an act so offen-
 sive as that of destroying the brother by
 the sister’s testimony.

The plot was published in the most
 terrifick manner. On the 31st of May,
 at a solemn fast, when they were listen-
 ing to the sermon, a messenger entered
 the church, and communicated his er-
 rand to Pym, who whispered it to others

that were placéd near him, and then went with them out of the church, leaving the rest in solicitude and amazement. They immediately sent guards to proper places, and that night apprehended Tomkyns and Waller; having yet traced nothing but that letters had been intercepted, from which it appeared that the parliament and the city were soon to be delivered into the hands of the cavaliers.

They perhaps yet knew little themselves, beyond some general and indistinct notices. “But Waller,” says Clarendon, “was so confounded with fear, “that he confessed whatever he had “heard, said, thought, or seen; all “that he knew of himself, and all
 “ that

“ that he suspected of others, without
 “ concealing any person of what degree
 “ or quality. soever, or any discourse
 “ which he had ever upon any occasion
 “ entertained with them ; what such and
 “ such ladies of great honour, to whom,
 “ upon the credit of his wit and great
 “ reputation, he had been admitted, had
 “ spoke to him in their chambers upon
 “ the proceedings in the houses, and
 “ how they had encouraged him to op-
 “ pose them ; what correspondence and
 “ intercourse they had with some mi-
 “ nisters of state at Oxford, and how
 “ they conveyed all intelligence thi-
 “ ther.” He accused the earl of Port-
 land and lord Conway as co-operating
 in the transaction ; and testified that

the earl of Northumberland had declared himself disposed in favour of any attempt that might check the violence of the parliament, and reconcile them to the king.

He undoubtedly confessed much, which they could never have discovered, and perhaps somewhat which they would wish to have been suppressed; for it is inconvenient, in the conflict of factions, to have that disaffection known which cannot safely be punished.

Tomkyns was seized on the same night with Waller, and appears likewise to have partaken of his cowardice; for he gave notice of Crispe's commission of array, of which Clarendon never knew how it was discovered. Tom-
kyns

kyns had been sent with the token appointed, to demand it from lady Aubigney, and had buried it in his garden, where, by his direction, it was dug up ; and thus the rebels obtained, what Clarendon confesses them to have had, the original copy.

It can raise no wonder that they formed one plot out of these two designs, however remote from each other, when they saw the same agent employed in both, and found the commission of array in the hands of him who was employed in collecting the opinions and affections of the people.

Of the plot, thus combined, they took care to make the most. They sent Pym among the citizens to tell them of
 I their

their imminent danger, and happy escape; and inform them, that the design was to seize the "lord mayor and
 "all the committee of militia, and
 "would not spare one of them." They drew up a vow and covenant, to be taken by every member of either house, by which he declared his detestation of all conspiracies against the parliament, and his resolution to detect and oppose them. They then appointed a day of thanksgiving for this wonderful delivery; which shut out, says Clarendon, all doubts whether there had been such a deliverance, and whether the plot was real or fictitious.

On June 11, the earl of Portland and lord Conway were committed, one to
 the

the custody of the mayor, and the other of the sheriff; but their lands and goods were not seized.

Waller was still to immerse himself deeper in ignominy. The earl of Portland and lord Conway denied the charge, and there was no evidence against them but the confession of Waller, of which undoubtedly many would be inclined to question the veracity. With these doubts he was so much terrified, that he endeavoured to persuade Portland to a declaration like his own, by a letter extant in Fenton's edition. "But for me," says he, "you had never known any thing of this business, which was prepared for another; and therefore I cannot imagine why you should

“ should hide it so far as to contract
 “ your own ruin by concealing it, and
 “ persisting unreasonably to hide that
 “ truth, which, without you, already is,
 “ and will every day be made more,
 “ manifest. Can you imagine yourself
 “ bound in honour to keep that secret,
 “ which is already revealed by another;
 “ or possible it should still be a secret,
 “ which is known to one of the other
 “ sex?—If you persist to be cruel to
 “ yourself for their sakes who deserve
 “ it not, it will nevertheless be made
 “ appear, ere long, I fear, to your ruin.
 “ Surely, if I had the happiness to wait
 “ on you, I could move you to com-
 “ passionate both yourself and me, who,
 “ desperate as my case is, am desirous
 “ to

“ to die with the honour of being
 “ known to have declared the truth.
 “ You have no reason to contend to
 “ hide what is already revealed—incon-
 “ siderately to throw away yourself, for
 “ the interest of others, to whom you
 “ are less obliged than you are aware
 “ of.”

This persuasion seems to have had little
 effect. Portland sent (June 29) a let-
 ter to the Lords, to tell them, that he
 “ is in custody, as he conceives, with-
 “ out any charge; and that, by what
 “ Mr. Waller hath threatened him with
 “ since he was imprisoned, he doth ap-
 “ prehend a very cruel, long, and ruin-
 “ ous restraint:—He therefore prays,
 “ that he may not find the effects of

“ Mr.

“ Mr. Waller’s threats, by a long and
 “ close imprisonment; but may be
 “ speedily brought to a legal trial, and
 “ then he is confident the vanity and
 “ falsehood of those informations which
 “ have been given against him will ap-
 “ pear.”

In consequence of this letter, the
 Lords ordered Portland and Waller to
 be confronted; when the one repeated
 his charge, and the other his denial.
 The examination of the plot being con-
 tinued (July 1), Thynn, usher of the
 house of Lords, deposed, that Mr. Wal-
 ler having had a conference with the
 lord Portland in an upper room, lord
 Portland said, when he came down, “ Do
 “ me the favour to tell my lord North-
 “ umberland,

“umberland, that Mr. Waller has ex-
 “tremely pressed me to save my own
 “life and his, by throwing the blame
 “upon the lord Conway and the earl
 “of Northumberland.”

Waller, in his letter to Portland, tells
 him of the reasons, which he could
 urge with resistless efficacy in a per-
 sonal conference ; but he over-rated his
 own oratory : his vehemence, whether
 of persuasion or intreaty, was returned
 with contempt.

One of his arguments with Portland
 is, that the plot is already known to a
 woman. This woman was doubtless
 lady Aubigny, who, upon this occasion,
 was committed to custody ; but who, in
 reality,

reality, when she delivered the commission, knew not what it was.

The parliament then proceeded against the conspirators, and committed their trial to a council of war. Tomkyns and Chaloner were hanged near their own doors. Tomkyns, when he came to die, said it was a *foolish business*; and indeed there seems to have been no hope that it should escape discovery; for though never more than three met at a time, yet a design so extensive must, by necessity, be communicated to many, who could not be expected to be all faithful, and all prudent. Chaloner was attended at this execution by Hugh Peters.

The

The earl of Northumberland being too great for prosecution, was only once examined before the Lords. The earl of Portland and lord Conway, persisting to deny the charge, and no testimony but Waller's yet appearing against them, were, after a long imprisonment, admitted to bail. Hassel, the king's messenger, who carried the letters to Oxford, died the night before his trial. Hampden was kept in prison to the end of his life. They whose names were inserted in the commission of array were not capitally punished, as it could not be proved that they had consented to their own nomination; but they were considered as malignants, and their estates were seized.

“Waller, though confessedly,” says Clarendon, “the most guilty, with incredible dissimulation affected such a remorse of conscience, that his trial was put off, out of Christian compassion, till he might recover his understanding.” What use he made of this interval, with what liberality and success he distributed flattery and money, and how, when he was brought (July 4) before the house, he confessed and lamented, and submitted and implored, may be read in the History of the Rebellion, (B. iii.) The speech, to which Clarendon ascribes the preservation of his ~~dear bought~~ life, is inserted in his works. The great historian, however, seems to have been mistaken in

relating that *he prevailed* in the principal part of his supplication, *not to be tried by a Council of War*; for, according to Whitlock, he was by expulsion from the house abandoned to the tribunal which he so much dreaded, and being tried and condemned, was reprieved by Essex; but, after a year's imprisonment, in which time resentment grew less acrimonious, paying a fine of ten thousand pounds, he was permitted *to recollect himself in another country*.

Of his behaviour in this part of his life, it is not necessary to direct the reader's opinion. "Let us not," says his last ingenious biographer, "condemn him with untempered severity, because he was not a prodigy which

“ the world hath seldom seen, because
 “ his character included not the poet,
 “ the orator, and the hero.”

For the place of his exile he chose France, and staid some time at Roan, where his daughter Margaret was born, who was afterwards his favourite, and his amanuensis. He then removed to Paris, where he lived with great splendour and hospitality; and from time to time amused himself with poetry, in which he sometimes speaks of the rebels, and their usurpation, in the natural language of an honest man.

At last it became necessary, for his support, to sell his wife's jewels; and being reduced, as he said, at last *to the rump-jewel*, he solicited from Cromwell

permission to return, and obtained it by the interest of colonel Scroop, to whom his sister was married. Upon the remains of a fortune, which the danger of his life had very much diminished, he lived at Hillburn, a house built by himself, very near to Beconsfield, where his mother resided. His mother, though related to Cromwell and Hampden, was zealous for the royal cause, and when Cromwell visited her used to reproach him; he, in return, would throw a napkin at her, and say he would not dispute with his aunt; but finding in time that she acted for the king, as well as talked, he made her a prisoner to her own daughter, in her

own house. If he would do any thing, he could not do less.

Cromwell, now protector, received Waller, as his kinsman, to familiar conversation. Waller, as he used to relate, found him sufficiently versed in ancient history; and when any of his enthusiastick friends came to advise or consult him, could sometimes overhear him discoursing in the cant of the times: but, when he returned, he would say, “ Cousin Waller, I must talk to these men in their own way;” and resumed the common stile of conversation.

He repaid the Protector for his favours (1654), by the famous panegyrick, which has been always considered as the first of his poetical productions.

actions. His choice of encomiastick topics is very judicious; for he considers Cromwell in his exaltation, without enquiring how he attained it; there is consequently no mention of the rebel or the regicide. All the former part of his hero's life is veiled with shades, and nothing is brought to view but the chief, the governor, the defender of England's honour, and the enlarger of her dominion. The act of violence by which he obtained the supreme power is lightly treated, and decently justified. It was certainly to be desired that the detestable band should be dissolved, which had destroyed the church, murdered the king, and filled the nation with tumult and op-

pression; yet Cromwel had not the right of dissolving them, for all that he had before done, could be justified only by supposing them invested with lawful authority. But combinations of wickedness would overwhelm the world by the advantage which licentious principles afford, did not those who have long practised perfidy, grow faithless to each other.

In the poem on the war with Spain, are some passages at least equal to the best parts of the panegyrick; and in the conclusion, the poet ventures yet a higher flight of flattery, by recommending royalty to Cromwel and the nation. Cromwel was very desirous, as appears from his conversation, related by

by Whitlock, of adding the title to the power of monarchy, and is supposed to have been withheld from it partly by fear of the army, and partly by fear of the laws, which, when he should govern by the name of king, would have restrained his authority. When therefore a deputation was solemnly sent to invite him to the Crown, he, after a long conference, refused it; but is said to have fainted in his coach, when he parted from them.

The poem on the death of the Protector seems to have been dictated by real veneration for his memory. Dryden and Sprat wrote on the same occasion; but they were young men, struggling into notice, and hoping for some

favour

favour from the ruling party. Waller had little to expect: he had received nothing but his pardon from Cromwel, and was not likely to ask any thing from those who should succeed him.

Soon afterwards the Restoration supplied him with another subject; and he exerted his imagination, his elegance, and his melody, with equal alacrity, for Charles the Second. It is not possible to read, without some contempt and indignation, poems of the same author, ascribing the highest degree of *power and piety* to Charles the First; then transferring the same *power and piety* to Oliver Cromwel; now inviting Oliver to take the crown, and then congratulating Charles the Second on his recovered right,

Neither.

Neither Cromwel nor Charles could value his testimony, as the effect of conviction, or receive his praises as effusions of reverence ; they could consider them but as the labour of invention and the tribute of dependence..

Poets, indeed, profess fiction ; but the legitimate end of fiction is the conveyance of truth ; and he that has flattery ready for all whom the vicissitudes of the world happen to exalt, must be scorned as a prostituted mind, that may retain the glitter of wit, but has lost the dignity of virtue..

The Congratulation was considered as inferior in poetical merit to the Panegyrick ; and it is reported, that when the king told Waller of the disparity,

he answered, " Poets, Sir, succeed better in fiction than in truth."

The Congratulation is indeed not inferior to the Pægyrick, either by decay of genius, or for want of diligence; but because Cromwel had done much, and Charles had done little. Cromwel wanted nothing to raise him to heroick excellence but virtue; and virtue his poet thought himself at liberty to supply. Charles had yet only the merit of struggling without success, and suffering without despair. A life of escapes and indigence could supply poetry with no splendid images.

In the first parliament summoned by Charles the Second (March 8, 1661), Waller sat for Hastings in Suffex, and

served for different places in all the parliaments of that reign. In a time when fancy and gaiety were the most powerful recommendations to regard, it is not likely that Waller was forgotten. He passed his time in the company that was highest, both in rank and wit, from which even his obstinate sobriety did not exclude him. Though he drank water, he was enabled by his fertility of mind, to heighten the mirth of Bacchanalian assemblies; and Mr. Saville said, that "no man in England" should keep him company without "drinking but Ned Waller."

The praise given him by St. Evremond is a proof of his reputation; for it was only by his reputation that he

could

could be known, as a writer, to a man who, though he lived a great part of a long life upon an English pension, never condescended to understand the language of the nation that maintained him.

In parliament, "he was," says Burnet, "the delight of the house, and "though old said the liveliest things of "any among them." This, however, is said in his account of the year seventy-five, when Waller was only seventy. His name as a speaker occurs often in Grey's Collections; but I have found no extracts that can be quoted as exhibiting any representation of abilities displayed rather in sallies of gaiety than cogency of argument.

He

He was of such consideration, that his remarks were circulated and recorded. When the duke of York's influence was high, both in Scotland and England, it drew, says Burnet, a lively reflection from Waller the celebrated wit. "He said the house of commons had resolved that the duke should not reign after the king's death; but the king, in opposition to them, had resolved that he should reign even in his life." If there appear no extraordinary *liveliness* in this *remark*, yet its reception proves the speaker to have been a *celebrated wit*; to have had a name which the men of wit were proud of mentioning.

He did not suffer his reputation to die gradually away, which may easily hap-

pen in a long life, but renewed his claim to poetical distinction from time to time, as occasions were offered, either by public events or private incidents; and contenting himself with the influence of his muse, or loving quiet better than influence, he never accepted any office of magistracy.

He was not, however, without some attention to his fortune; for he asked from the king (in 1665) the provostship of Eaton College, and obtained it; but Clarendon refused to put the seal to the grant, alleging that it could be held only by a clergyman. It is known that Sir Henry Wotton qualified himself for it by Deacon's orders.

To this opposition, the *Biographia* imputes the violence and acrimony with which Waller joined Buckingham's faction in the prosecution of Clarendon. The motive was illiberal and dishonest, and shewed that more than sixty years had not been able to teach him morality. His accusation is such as conscience can hardly be supposed to dictate without the help of malice. "We were to
 " be governed by janizaries instead of
 " parliaments, and are in danger from
 " a worse plot than that of the fifth
 " of November; then, if the lords and
 " commons had been destroyed, there
 " had been a succession; but here both
 " had been destroyed for ever." This is the language of a man who is glad of

an opportunity to rail, and ready to sacrifice truth to interest at one time, and to anger at another.

A year after the Chancellor's banishment, another vacancy gave him encouragement for another petition, which the king referred to the council, who, after hearing the question argued by lawyers for three days, determined that the office could be held only by a clergyman, according to the act of uniformity, since the provosts had always received institution, as for a parsonage, from the bishops of Lincoln. The king then said, he could not break the law which he had made; and Dr. Zachary Cradock, famous for a single sermon, at
most

most for two sermons, was chosen by the Fellows.

That he asked any thing else is not known; it is certain that he obtained nothing, though he continued obsequious to the court through the rest of Charles's reign.

At the accession of king James (in 1685) he was chosen for parliament, being then fourscore, at Saltash in Cornwall; and wrote a *Presage of the Downfall of the Turkish Empire*, which he presented to the king on his birthday. It is remarked, by his commentator Fenton, that in reading Tasso he had early imbibed a veneration for the heroes of the Holy War, and a zealous enmity to the Turks, which never left him. James

however, having soon after begun what he thought a holy war at home, made haste to put all molestation of the Turks out of his power.

James treated him with kindness and familiarity, of which instances are given by the writer of his Life. One day, taking him into the closet, the king asked him how he liked one of the pictures: "My eyes, said Waller, are "dim, and I do not know it." The king said, it was the princess of Orange. "She is, said Waller, like the greatest "woman in the world." The king asked who was that; and was answered, Queen Elizabeth. "I wonder, said the "king, you should think so; but I must "confess she had a wise council." "And,

“ And, Sir, said Waller, did you ever
 “ know a fool chuse a wife one ?” Such
 is the story, which I once heard of some
 other man. Pointed axioms, and acute
 replies, fly loose about the world, and
 are assigned successively to those whom
 it may be the fashion to celebrate.

When the king knew that he was
 about to marry his daughter to Dr.
 Birch, a clergyman, he ordered a French
 gentleman to tell him, that “ the king
 “ wondered he could think of marrying
 “ his daughter to a falling church.”
 “ The king, says Waller, does me great
 “ honour in taking notice of my do-
 “ mestick affairs; but I have lived long
 “ enough to observe that this falling
 “ church has got a trick of rising again.”

He took notice to his friends of the king's conduct; and said, that " he " would be left like a whale upon the " strand." Whether he was privy to any of the transactions which ended in the Revolution, is not known. His heir joined the prince of Orange.

Having now attained an age beyond which the laws of nature seldom suffer life to be extended, otherwise than by a future state, he seems to have turned his mind upon preparation for the decisive hour, and therefore consecrated his poetry to devotion. It is pleasing to discover that his piety was without weakness; that his intellectual powers continued vigorous; and that the lines which he composed when *he, for age,*

could

could neither read nor write, are not inferior to the effusions of his youth.

Towards the decline of life, he bought a small house, with a little land, at Colshill; and said, “he should be
 “glad to die, like the stag, where he
 “was roused.” This, however, did not happen. When he was at Beconsfield, he found his legs grow tumid: he went to Windsor, where Sir Charles Scarborough then attended the king, and requested him, as both a friend and a physician, to tell him, *what that swelling meant*. “Sir, answered Scarborough, “your blood will run no longer.” Waller repeated some lines of Virgil, and went home to die.

As the disease increased upon him, he composed himself for his departure; and calling upon Dr. Birch to give him the holy sacrament, he desired his children to take it with him, and made an earnest declaration of his faith in Christianity. It now appeared, what part of his conversation with the great could be remembered with delight. He related, that being present when the duke of Buckingham talked profanely before king Charles, he said to him, "My
 " lord, I am a great deal older than
 " your grace, and have, I believe, heard
 " more arguments for atheism than ever
 " your grace did; but I have lived long
 " enough to see there is nothing in
 " them, and so, I hope, your grace will."

He died October 21, 1687, and was buried at Beconsfield, with a monument erected by his son's executors, for which Rymer wrote the inscription, and which I hope is now rescued from dilapidation.

He left several children by his second wife; of whom, his daughter was married to Dr. Birch. Benjamin, the eldest son, was disinherited, and sent to New Jersey, as wanting common understanding. Edmund, the second son, inherited the estate, and represented Agmondestham in parliament, but at last turned Quaker. William, the third son, was a merchant in London. Stephen, the fourth, was an eminent Doctor of Laws, and one of the Commissioners for the Union. There is, said

said to have been a fifth, of whom no account has descended.

The character of Waller, both moral and intellectual, has been drawn by Clarendon, to whom he was familiarly known, with nicety, which certainly none to whom he was not known can presume to emulate. It is therefore inserted here, with such remarks as others have supplied; after which, nothing remains but a critical examination of his poetry.

“ Edmund Waller,” says Clarendon,
 “ was born to a very fair estate, by the
 “ parsimony, or frugality, of a wise fa-
 “ ther and mother: and he thought it
 “ so commendable an advantage, that
 “ he resolved to improve it with his

“ utmost care, upon which in his na-
 “ ture he was too much intent : and, in
 “ order to that, he was so much re-
 “ served and retired, that he was scarce
 “ ever heard of, till by his address and
 “ dexterity he had gotten a very rich
 “ wife in the city, against all the re-
 “ commendation and countenance and
 “ authority of the Court, which was
 “ thoroughly engaged on the behalf of
 “ Mr. Crofts ; and which used to be
 “ successful in that age, against any op-
 “ position. He had the good fortune
 “ to have an alliance and friendship
 “ with Dr. Morley, who had assisted
 “ and instructed him in the reading
 “ many good books, to which his na-
 “ tural parts and promptitude inclined

“ him, especially the poets: and at the
 “ age when other men used to give over
 “ writing verses (for he was near thirty
 “ years, when he first engaged himself
 “ in that exercise; at least, that he was
 “ known to do so), he surprised the
 “ town with two or three pieces of that
 “ kind; as if a tenth muse had been
 “ newly born, to cherish drooping
 “ poetry. The Doctor at that time
 “ brought him into that company,
 “ which was most celebrated for good
 “ conversation; where he was received
 “ and esteemed, with great applause
 “ and respect. He was a very pleasant
 “ discourser, in earnest and in jest, and
 “ therefore very grateful to all kind of
 “ com-

“ company, where he was not the less
 “ esteemed for being very rich.

“ He had been even nursed in par-
 “ liaments, where he sat when he was
 “ very young; and so, when they were
 “ resumed again (after a long inter-
 “ mission), he appeared in those assem-
 “ blies with great advantage; having
 “ a graceful way of speaking, and by
 “ thinking much on several arguments
 “ (which his temper and complexion,
 “ that had much of melancholic, in-
 “ clined him to), he seemed often to
 “ speak upon the sudden, when the
 “ occasion had only administered the op-
 “ portunity of saying what he had tho-
 “ roughly considered, which gave a great
 “ lustre to all he said; which yet was
 “ rather

“ rather of delight than weight. There
 “ needs no more be said to extol the
 “ excellence and power of his wit, and
 “ pleasantness of his conversation, than
 “ that it was of magnitude enough to
 “ cover a world of very great faults;
 “ that is, so to cover them, that they
 “ were not taken notice of to his re-
 “ proach; viz. a narrowness in his na-
 “ ture to the lowest degree; an abject-
 “ ness and want of courage to support
 “ him in any virtuous undertaking; an
 “ insinuation and servile flattery to the
 “ height, the vainest and most impe-
 “ rious nature could be contented with;
 “ that it preserved and won his life from
 “ those, who were most resolved to take
 “ it; and in an occasion in which he
 “ ought

“ ought to have been ambitious to have
 “ lost it; and then preserved him from
 “ from the reproach and contempt, that
 “ was due to him, for so preserving it,
 “ and for vindicating it at such a price;
 “ that it had power to reconcile him to
 “ those, whom he had most offended
 “ and provoked; and continued to his
 “ age with that rare felicity, that his
 “ company was acceptable, where his
 “ spirit was odious; and he was at least
 “ pitied, where he was most detested.”

Such is the account of Clarendon;
 on which it may not be improper to
 make some remarks.

“ He was very little known till he
 “ had obtained a rich wife in the
 “ city.”

He

He obtained the rich wife about the age of three-and-twenty; an age before which few men are conspicuous much to their advantage. He was known, however, in parliament and at court; and, if he spent part of his time in privacy, it is not unreasonable to suppose that he intended the improvement of his mind as well as of his fortune.

That Clarendon might misjudge the motive of his retirement is the more probable, because he has evidently mistaken the commencement of his poetry, which he supposes him not to have attempted before thirty. As his first pieces were perhaps not printed, the succession of his compositions was not known; and Clarendon, who cannot be imagined

to

to have been very studious of poetry, did not rectify his first opinion by consulting Waller's book.

Clarendon observes, that he was introduced to the wits of the age by Dr. Morley; but the writer of his Life relates that he was already among them, when, hearing a noise in the street, and enquiring the cause, they found a son of Ben Jonson under an arrest. This was Morley, whom Waller set free at the expence of one hundred pounds, took him into the country as director of his studies, and then procured him admission into the company of the friends of literature. Of this fact, Clarendon had a nearer knowledge than the biographer,

g

grapher,

grapher, and is therefore more to be credited.

The account of Waller's parliamentary eloquence is seconded by Burnet, who, though he calls him "the delight of the house," adds, that "he was only concerned to say that, which should make him be applauded, he never laid the business of the house to heart, being a vain and empty though a witty man."

Of his insinuation and flattery it is not unreasonable to believe that the truth is told. Ascham, in his elegant description of those whom in modern language we term Wits, says, that they are *open flatterers, and privy mockers*. Waller shewed

shewed a little of both, when, upon sight of the dutchess of Newcastle's verses on the death of a Stag, he declared that he would give all his own compositions to have written them; and being charged with the exorbitance of his adulation, answered, that "nothing was too much to be given, that a lady might be saved from the disgrace of such a vile performance." This however was no very mischievous or very unusual deviation from truth: had his hypocrisy been confined to such transactions, he might have been forgiven, though not praised; for who forbears to flatter an author or a lady?

Of the laxity of his political principles, and the weakness of his resolution,

he experienced the natural effect, by losing the esteem of every party. From Cromwell he had only his recall; and from Charles the Second, who delighted in his company, he obtained only the pardon of his relation Hampden, and the safety of Hampden's son.

As far as conjecture can be made from the whole of his writing, and his conduct, he was habitually and deliberately a friend to monarchy. His deviation towards democracy proceeded from his connection with Hampden, for whose sake he prosecuted Crawley with great bitterness; and the invective which he pronounced on that occasion was so popular, that twenty thousand copies are said by his bio-

grapher to have been sold in one day.

It is confessed that his faults still lost him many friends, at least many companions. His convivial power of pleasing is universally acknowledged; but those who conversed with him intimately, found him not only passionate, especially in his old age, but resentful; so that the interposition of friends was sometimes necessary.

His wit and his poetry naturally connected him with the polite writers of his time: he was joined with lord Buckhurst in the translation of Corneille's Pompey; and is said to have added his help to that of Cowley in the original draught of the Rehearsal.

The care of his fortune, which Clarendon imputes to him in a degree little less than criminal, was either not constant or not successful; for, having inherited a patrimony of three thousand five hundred a year in the time of James the First, and augmented it at least by one wealthy marriage, he left, about the time of the Revolution, an income of not more than twelve or thirteen hundred; which, when the different value of money is reckoned, will be found perhaps not more than a fourth part of what he once possessed.

Of this diminution, part was the consequence of the gifts which he was forced to scatter, and the fine which he was condemned to pay at the detection

of his plot; and if his estate, as is related in his Life, was sequestered, he had probably contracted debts when he lived in exile; for we are told that at Paris he lived in splendor, and was the only Englishman except the lord St. Albans that kept a table.

His unlucky plot compelled him to sell a thousand a year; of the waste of the rest there is no account, except that he is confessed by his biographer to have been a bad economist. He seems to have deviated from the common practice; to have been a hoarder in his first years, and a squanderer in his last.

Of his course of studies, or choice of books, nothing is known more than that he professed himself unable to read

Chapman's translation of Homer without rapture. His opinion concerning the duty of a poet is contained in his declaration, that " he would blot from his " works any line that did not contain " some motive to virtue."

THE characters, by which Waller intended to distinguish his writings, are spriteliness and dignity: in his smaller pieces he endeavours to be gay; in the larger, to be great. Of his airy and light productions, the chief source is gallantry, that attentive reverence of female excellence, which has descended to us from the Gothic ages. As his poems are commonly occasional, and his addressees personal, he was not so

liberally supplied with grand as with soft images; for beauty is more easily found than magnanimity.

The delicacy, which he cultivated, restrains him to a certain nicety and caution, even when he writes upon the slightest matter. He has therefore in his whole volume nothing burlesque, and seldom any thing ludicrous or familiar. He seems always to do his best; though his subjects are often unworthy of his care. It is not easy to think without some contempt on an author, who is growing illustrious in his own opinion by verses, at one time, "To a
 " Lady, who can do any thing, but
 " sleep, when she pleases." At another,
 " To a Lady, who can sleep, when she
 " please "

“pleases.” Now, “To a Lady, on her
 “passing through a crowd of people.”
 Then, “On a braid of divers colours
 “woven by four fair Ladies :” “On a
 “tree cut in paper :” or, “To a Lady,
 “from whom he received the copy of
 “verses on the paper-tree, which for
 “many years had been missing.”

Genius now and then produces a lucky trifle. We still read the *Dove* of Anacreon, and *Sparrow* of Catullus ; and a writer naturally pleases himself with a performance, which owes nothing to the subject. But compositions merely pretty have the fate of other pretty things, and are quitted in time for something useful : they are flowers fragrant and fair, but of short duration ;

or

or they are bloffoms to be valued only
as they foretell fruits.

Among Waller's little poems are some,
which their excellency ought to fecure
from oblivion; as, *To Amoret*, comparing
the different modes of regard with
which he looks on her and *Sachariffa*;
and the verfes *On Love*, that begin, *An-
ger in basty Words or Blows*.

In others he is not equally fuccefs-
ful; fometimes his thoughts are defi-
cient, and fometimes his expreffion.

The numbers are not always mufical;
as,

Fair Venus, in thy foft arms

The god of rage confine;

For thy whifpers are the charms

Which only can divert his fierce
defign.

What tho' he frown, and to tumult
do incline ;

Thou the flame

Kindled in his breast canst tame,
With that snow which unmelted lies
on thine.

He seldom indeed fetches an amorous sentiment from the depths of science ; his thoughts are for the most part easily understood, and his images such as the superficies of nature readily supplies ; he has a just claim to popularity, because he writes to common degrees of knowledge, and is free at least from philosophical pedantry, unless perhaps the end of a song *to the Sun* may be excepted, in which he is too much a Copernican. To which may be added, the simile of the *Palm* in the verses

on her passing through a crowd; and a line in a more serious poem on the *Restoration*, about vipers and treacle, which can only be understood by those who happen to know the composition of the *Theriaca*.

His thoughts are sometimes hyperbolical, and his images unnatural:

——The plants admire,
No less than those of old did Orpheus'
lyre;
If she sit down, with tops all tow'rd
her bow'd;
They round about her into arbours
crowd:
Or if she walks, in even ranks they
stand,
Like some well-marshal'd and obse-
quious band.

In another place :

While in the park I sing, the listening
deer

Attend my passion, and forget to fear :
When to the beeches I report my flame,
They bow their heads, as if they felt
the same :

To gods appealing, when I reach their
bowers,

With loud complaints they answer me
in flowers.

To thee a wild and cruel soul is given,
More deaf than trees, and prouder
than the heaven !

On the head of a Stag :

O fertile head ! which every year
Could such a crop of wonder bear !

The

The teeming earth did never bring
 So soon, so hard, so huge a thing :
 Which might it never have been cast,
 Each year's growth added to the last,
 These lofty branches had supply'd
 The Earth's bold sons prodigious
 pride :

Heaven with these engines had been
 scald,
 When mountains heap'd on mountains
 fail'd.

Sometimes, having succeeded in the
 first part, he makes a feeble conclusion.
 In the song of "Sachariffa's and Amo-
 ret's Friendship," the two last stanzas
 ought to have been omitted.

His

His images of gallantry are not always in the highest degree delicate.

Then shall my love this doubt displace,
And gain such trust, that I may come
And banquet sometimes on thy face,
But make my constant meals at
home.

Some applications may be thought too remote and unsequential; as in the verses on the *Lady dancing* :

The fun in figures such as these,
Joys with the moon to play :
To the sweet strains they advance,
Which do result from their own
spheres ;

As this nymph's dance
Moves with the numbers which she
hears.

Sometimes a thought, which might perhaps fill a distich, is expanded and attenuated, till it grows weak and almost evanescent.

Chloris ! since first our calm of peace
Was frighted hence, this good we
find,

Your favours with your fears increase,
And growing mischiefs make you
kind.

So the fair tree, which still preserves
Her fruit, and state, while no wind
blows,

In storms from that uprightness swerves;
And the glad earth about her strows
With treasure from her yielding
boughs.

h

His

His images are not always distinct; as, in the following passage, he confounds *Love* as a person with *love* as a passion :

Some other nymphs, with colours faint,
And pencil slow, may Cupid paint,
And a weak heart in time destroy ;
She has a stamp, and prints the Boy :
Can, with a single look, inflame
The coldest breast, the rudest tame.

His fallies of casual flattery are sometimes elegant and happy, as that *in return for the Silver Pen* ; and sometimes empty and trifling, as that *upon the Card torn by the Queen*. There are a few lines written in the *Dutchess's Tasso*, which he is said by Fenton to have kept a sum-

mer under correction. It happened to Waller, as to others, that his success was not always in proportion to his labour.

Of these petty compositions, neither the beauties nor the faults deserve much attention. The amorous verses have this to recommend them, that they are less hyperbolical than those of some other poets. Waller is not always at the last gasp; he does not die of a frown, nor live upon a smile. There is however too much love, and too many trifles. Little things are made too important; and the Empire of Beauty is represented as exerting its influence further than can be allowed by the multiplicity of human passions, and the variety of human wants. Such books there-

fore may be considered as shewing the world under a false appearance, and so far as they obtain credit from the young and unexperienced, as misleading expectation, and misguiding practice.

Of his nobler and more weighty performances, the greater part is panegyrical; for of praise he was very lavish, as is observed by his imitator, Lord Lansdown :

No fatyr stalks within the hallow'd
 ground, ●
 But queens and heroines, kings and
 gods abound ;
 Glory and arms and love are all the
 found.

In

In the first poem, on the danger of the Prince on the coast of Spain, there is a puerile and ridiculous mention of Arion at the beginning; and the last paragraph, on the *Cable*, is in part ridiculously mean, and in part ridiculously tumid. The poem, however, is such as may be justly praised, without much allowance for the state of our poetry and language at that time.

The two next poems are upon the King's *behaviour at the death of Buckingham*, and upon his *Navy*.

He has, in the first, used the pagan deities with great propriety :

'Twas want of such a precedent as this
Made the old heathen frame their gods
amiss.

In the poem on the Navy, those lines are very noble, which suppose the King's power secure against a second Deluge; so noble, that it were almost criminal to remark the mistake of *centre* for *surface*, or to say that the empire of the sea would be worth little if it were not that the waters terminate in land.

The poem upon Sallee has forcible sentiments; but the conclusion is feeble. That on the Repairs of St. Paul's has something vulgar and obvious; such as the mention of Amphion; and something violent and harsh, as

So all our minds with his conspire to
 grace

The Gentiles' great apostle, and de-

—

Those

Those state-obscuring sheds, that like
a chain

Seem'd to confine, and fetter him
again :

Which the glad faint shakes off at his
command,

As once the viper from his sacred hand.

So joys the aged oak, when we divide

The creeping ivy from his injur'd side.

Of the two last couplets, the first is extravagant, and the second mean.

His praise of the Queen is too much exaggerated ; and the thought, that she
“ saves lovers, by cutting off hope, as
“ gangrenes are cured by lopping the
“ limb,” presents nothing to the mind
but disgust and horror.

Of the *Battle of the Summer Islands*, it seems not easy to say whether it is intended to raise terror or merriment. The beginning is too splendid for jest, and the conclusion too light for seriousness. The versification is studied, the scenes are diligently displayed, and the images artfully amplified; but as it ends neither in joy nor sorrow, it will scarcely be read a second time.

The *Panegyrick* upon Cromwell has obtained from the public a very liberal dividend of praise, which however cannot be said to have been unjustly lavished; for such a series of verses had rarely appeared before in the English language. Of the lines some are grand, some are graceful, and all are musical.

There

There is now and then a feeble verse,
or a trifling thought; but its great fault
is the choice of its hero.

The poem of *The War with Spain* begins with lines more vigorous and striking than Waller is accustomed to produce. The succeeding parts are variegated with better passages and worse. There is something too far-fetched in the comparison of the Spaniards drawing the English on, by saluting St. Lucar with cannon, *to lambs awakening the lion by bleating*. The fate of the Marquis and his Lady, who were burnt in their ship, would have moved more, had the poet not made him die like the Phoenix, because he had spices about him, nor expressed their affection and

their end by a conceit at once false and vulgar:

Alive, in equal flames of love they
burn'd,

And now together are to ashes turn'd.

The verses to Charles, on his Return, were doubtless intended to counterbalance the panegyric on Cromwel. If it has been thought inferior to that with which it is naturally compared, the cause of its deficiency has been already remarked.

The remaining pieces it is not necessary to examine singly. They must be supposed to have faults and beauties of the same kind with the rest. The Sacred Poems, however, deserve particular
regard ;

regard ; they were the work of Waller's declining life, of those hours in which he looked upon the fame and the folly of the time past with the sentiments which his great predecessor Petrarch bequeathed to posterity, upon his review of that love and poetry which have given him immortality.

That natural jealousy which makes every man unwilling to allow much excellence in another, always produces a disposition to believe that the mind grows old with the body ; and that he, whom we are now forced to confess superior, is hastening daily to a level with ourselves. By delighting to think this of the living, we learn to think it of the dead ; and Fenton, with all his

kindness for Waller, has the luck to mark the exact time when his genius passed the zenith, which he places at his fifty-fifth year. This is to allot the mind but a small portion. Intellectual decay is doubtless not uncommon; but it seems not to be universal. Newton was in his eighty-fifth year improving his Chronology, a few days before his death; and Waller appears not, in my opinion, to have lost at eighty-two any part of his poetical powers.

His Sacred Poems do not please like some of his other works; but before the fatal fifty-five, had he written on the same subjects, his success would hardly have been better.

It

It has been the frequent lamentation of good men, that verse has been too little applied to the purposes of worship, and many attempts have been made to animate devotion by pious poetry; that they have very seldom attained their end is sufficiently known, and it may not be improper to enquire why they have miscarried.

Let no pious ear be offended if I advance, in opposition to many authorities, that poetical devotion cannot often please. The doctrines of religion may indeed be defended in a didactick poem; and he who has the happy power of arguing in verse, will not lose it because his subject is sacred. A poet may describe the beauty and the grandeur of

Nature

Nature, the flowers of the Spring, and the harvests of Autumn, the vicissitudes of the Tide, and the revolutions of the Sky, and praise the Maker for his works in lines which no reader shall lay aside. The subject of the disputation is not piety, but the motives to piety ; that of the description is not God, but the works of God.

Contemplative piety, or the intercourse between God and the human soul, cannot be poetical. Man admitted to implore the mercy of his Creator, and plead the merits of his Redeemer, is already in a higher state than poetry can confer.

The essence of poetry is invention ; such invention as, by producing something

thing unexpected, surprises and delights. The topicks of devotion are few, and being few are universally known; but few as they are, they can be made no more; they can receive no grace from novelty of sentiment, and very little from novelty of expression.

Poetry pleases by exhibiting an idea more grateful to the mind than things themselves afford. This effect proceeds from the display of those parts of nature which attract, and the concealment of those which repel the imagination: but religion must be shewn as it is; suppression and addition equally corrupt it; and such as it is, it is known already.

From

From poetry the reader justly expects, and from good poetry always obtains, the enlargement of his comprehension and elevation of his fancy; but this is rarely to be hoped by Christians from metrical devotion. Whatever is great, desirable, or tremendous, is comprised in the name of the Supreme Being. Omnipotence cannot be exalted; Infinity cannot be amplified; Perfection cannot be improved.

The employments of pious meditation are Faith, Thanksgiving, Repentance, and Supplication. Faith, invariably uniform, cannot be invested by fancy with decorations. Thanksgiving, the most joyful of all holy effusions, yet addressed to a Being without passions, is confined

to a few modes, and is to be felt rather than expressed. Repentance, trembling in the presence of the Judge, is not at leisure for cadences and epithets. Supplication of man to man may diffuse itself through many topicks of persuasion; but supplication to God can only cry for mercy.

Of sentiments purely religious, it will be found that the most simple expression is the most sublime. Poetry loses its lustre and its power, because it is applied to the decoration of something more excellent than itself. All that verse can do is to help the memory, and delight the ear, and for these purposes it may be very useful; but it supplies nothing to the mind. The ideas of Chris-

tian Theology are too simple for eloquence, too sacred for fiction, and too majestick for ornament ; to recommend them by tropes and figures, is to magnify by a concave mirror the sidereal hemisphere.

As much of Waller's reputation was owed to the softness and smoothness of his Numbers ; it is proper to consider those minute particulars to which a versifyer must attend.

He certainly very much excelled in smoothness most of the writers who were living when his poetry commenced. The poets of Elizabeth had attained an art of modulation, which was afterwards neglected or forgotten. Fairfax was acknowledged by him as his model ; and

he

he might have studied with advantage the poem of Davies, which, though merely philosophical, yet seldom leaves the ear ungratified.

But he was rather smooth than strong; of *the full resounding line*, which Pope attributes to Dryden, he has given very few examples. The critical decision has given the praise of strength to Denham, and of sweetness to Waller.

His excellence of versification has some abatements. He uses the expletive *do* very frequently; and though he used to see it almost universally ejected, was not more careful to avoid it in his last compositions than in his first. Praise had given him confidence; and finding the world satisfied, he satisfied himself.

His rhymes are sometimes weak words: *so* is found to make the rhyme twice in ten lines, and occurs often as a rhyme through his book.

His double rhymes, in heroick verse, have been censured by Mrs. Phillips, who was his rival in the translation of Corneille's Pompey; and more faults might be found, were not the enquiry below attention.

He sometimes uses the obsolete termination of verbs, as *waxeth*, *affecteth*; and sometimes retains the final syllable of the preterite, as *amazed*, *supposed*; of which I know not whether it is not to the detriment of our language that we have totally rejected them.

Of triplets he is sparing; but he did not wholly forbear them : of an Alexandrine he has given no example.

The general character of his poetry is elegance and gaiety. He is never pathetick, and very rarely sublime. He seems neither to have had a mind much elevated by nature, nor amplified by learning. His thoughts are such as a liberal conversation and large acquaintance with life would easily supply. They had however, then perhaps, that grace of novelty, which they are now often supposed to want by those who, having already found them in later books, do not know or enquire who produced them first. This treatment is unjust.

Let not the original author lose by his imitators.

Praise however should be due before it is given. The author of Waller's Life ascribes to him the first practice, of what Erythræus and some late critics call *Alliteration*, of using in the same verse many words beginning with the same letter. But this knack, whatever be its value, was so frequent among our early writers, that Gascoign, a writer of the sixteenth century, warns the young poet against affecting it; and Shakespeare in the *Midsummer Night's Dream* is supposed to ridicule it.

He borrows too many of his sentiments and illustrations from the old Mythology, for which it is vain to plead

the

the example of the ancient poets : the deities which they introduced so frequently, were considered as realities, so far as to be received by the imagination; whatever sober reason might even then determine. But of these images time has tarnished the splendor. A fiction, not only detected but despised, can never afford a solid basis to any position, though sometimes it may furnish a transient allusion, or slight illustration. No modern monarch can be much exalted by hearing that, as Hercules had had his *club*, he has his *navy*.

But of the praise of Waller, though much may be taken away, much will remain; for it cannot be denied that he added something to our elegance of diction,

and something to our propriety of thought; and to him may be applied what Taffo said, with equal spirit and justice, of himself and Guarini, when, having perused the *Pastor Fido*, he cried out, “ If he had not read *Aminta*, he “ had not excelled it.”



AS Waller professed himself to have learned the art of versification from Fairfax, it has been thought proper to subjoin a specimen of his work, which, after Mr. Hoole's translation, will perhaps not be soon reprinted. By knowing the state in which Waller found our

poetry,

poetry, the reader may judge how much he improved it.

1.

Erminiaes fled (this while) his mistress bore
Through forrests thicke among the shadie treene,
Her feeble hand the bridle raines forlore,
Halfe in a swoone she was for feare I weene ;
But her flit courser spared nere the more,
To beare her through the desert woods unseene
Of her strong foes, that chas'd her through the
 plaine,
And still pursu'd, but still pursu'd in vaine.

2.

Like as the wearie hounds at last retire,
Windlesse, displeased, from the fruitlesse chace,
When the flie beast Tapisht in bush and brire,
No art nor paines can rowse out of his place :
The Christian knights so full of shame and ire
Returned backe, with faint and wearie pace ;
Yet still the fearefull Dame fled, swift as winde,
Nor euer staid, nor euer lookt behinde.

3.

Through thicke and thinne, all night, all day,
 she driued,
 Withouten comfort, companie or guide,
 Her plaints and teares with euery thought re-
 uined,
 She heard and saw her greefes, but nought beside.
 But when the funne his burning chariot diued
 In *Thetis* waue, and wearie teame vntide,
 On Iordans sandie banks her course she staid,
 At last, there downe she light, and downe she
 laid.

4.

Her teares, her drinke; her food, her sorrowings,
 This was her diet that vnhappy night:
 But sleepe (that sweet repose and quiet brings)
 To ease the greefes of discontented wight,
 Spred foorth his tender, soft, and nimble wings,
 In his dull armes foulding the virgin bright;
 And loue, his mother, and the graces kept
 Strong watch and warde, while this faire Ladie
 slept.

5.

Birds awakte her with their morning song,
 Arbling musicke pearst her tender care,

The murmuring brookes and whistling windes
among

The ratling boughes, and leaues, their parts did
beare;

Her eies vnclos'd beheld the groues along
Of swaines and shepherd groomes, that dwellings
weare;

And that sweet noise, birds, winds, and waters
sent,

Prouokte againe the virgin to lament.

6.

Her plaints were interrupted with a sound,
That seem'd from thickest bushes to proceed,
Some iolly shepherd sung a lustie round,
And to his voice had tun'd his oaten reed;
Thither she went, an old man there she found,
(At whose right hand his little flocke did feed)
Sat making baskets, his three sonnes among,
That learn'd their fathers art, and learn'd his
song.

7.

Beholding one in shining armes appeare
The feelie man and his were sore dismaid;
But sweet *Erminia* comforted their feare,
Her ventall vp, her visage open laid,

You happie folke, of heau'n beloned deare,
 Worke on (quoth she) vpon your harmlesse traid,
 These dreadfull armes I beare no warfare bring
 To your sweet toile, nor those sweet tunes you
 sing.

8.

But father, since this land, these townes and
 towres,
 Destroied are with sword, with fire and spoile,
 How may it be unhurt, that you and yours
 In safetie thus, applic your harmlesse toile?
 My sonne (quoth he) this poore estate of ours
 Is euer safe from storme of warlike broile;
 This wildernesse doth vs in safetie keepe,
 No thundring drum, no trumpet breakes our
 sleepe.

9.

Haply iust heau'ns defence and shield of right,
 Doth loue the innocence of simple swaines,
 The thunderbolts on highest mountaines light,
 And feld or neuer strike the lower plaines;
 So kings haue cause to feare *Belionaes* might,
 Not they whose sweat and toile their dinner gains,
 Nor

Nor ever greedie foldier was entised
By pouertie, neglected and despised.

10.

O pouertie, chiefe of the heau'nly brood,
Dearer to me than wealth or kingly crowne!
No wish for honour, thirst of others good,
Can moue my hart, contented with mine owne:
We quench our thirst with water of this flood,
Nor feare we poison should therein be throwne;
These little flocks of sheepe and tender goates
Giue milke for food, and wooll to make us
coates.

11.

We little wish, we need but little wealth,
From cold and hunger vs to cloath and feed;
These are my sonnes, their care preferues from
stealth
Their fathers flocks, nor seruants mee I need:
Amid these groues I walke oft for my health,
And to the fishes, birds and beastes giue heed,
How they are fed, in forrest, spring and lake,
And their contentment for ensample take.

12.

Time was (for each one hath his doting time)
 These siluer locks were golden tresses than)
 That countrie life I hated as a crime,
 And from the Forrests sweet contentment ran,
 To Memphis stately pallace would I clime,
 And there became the mightie Caliphes man,
 And though I but a simple gardner weare,
 Yet could I marke abuses, see and heare.

13.

Entised on with hope of future gaine,
 I suffred long what did my soule displease ;
 But when my youth was spent, my hope was vaine,
 I felt my natiue strength at last decrease ;
 I gan my losse of lustie yeeres complaine,
 And wisht I had enioy'd the countries peace ;
 I bod the court farewell, and with content
 My later age here haue I quiet spent.

14.

While thus he spake, *Erminia* husht and still
 His wise discourses heard, with great attention,
 His speeches graue those idle fancies kill,
 Which in her troubled soule bred such dissention ;
After

After much thought reformed was her will,
 Within those woods to dwell was her intention,
 Till fortune should occasion new afford,
 To turne her home to her desired Lord.

15.

She said therefore, O shepherd fortunate!
 That troubles some didst whilom feele and proue,
 Yet liuest now in this contented state,
 Let my mishap thy thoughts to pitie moue,
 To entertaine me as a willing mate
 In shepherds life, which I admire and loue;
 Within these pleasant groues perchance my
 hart,
 Of her discomforts, may vnload some part.

16.

If gold or wealth of most esteemed deare,
 If iewels rich, thou diddest hold in prise,
 Such store thereof, such plentie haue I seen,
 As to a greedie minde might well suffice:
 With that downe trickled many a siluer teare,
 Two christall streames fell from her watrie eies;
 Part of her sad misfortunes than she told,
 And wept, and with her wept that shepherd old.

17.

17.

With speeches kinde, he gan the virgin deare
 Towards his cottage gently home to guide ;
 His aged wife there made her homely cheare,
 Yet welcomde her, and plapt her by her side.
 The Princeſſe dond a poore paſtoraes geare,
 A kerchiefe couſe vpon her head ſhe tide ;
 But yet her geſtures and her lookes (I geſſe)
 Were ſuch, as ill beſeem'd a ſhepherdeſſe.

18.

Not thoſe rude garments could obſcure, and hide,
 The heau'nly beautie of her angels face,
 Nor was her princely ofſpring damnifide,
 Or ought diſparag'de, by thoſe labours bace ;
 Her little flocks to paſture would ſhe guide,
 And milke her goates, and in their folds them
 place,
 Both cheeſe and butter could ſhe make, and
 frame
 Her ſelfe to pleaſe the ſhepherd and his dame.



